

**SAPAN DIDIAH**  
*Sapan Didiah*

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## SAPAN DIDIAH

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## **SAPAN DIDIAH**

### **I. The Dry Season**

The long dry season had come. The rain had not fallen in Batu Sangkar for a very long time. The well water had totally run out and river water had subsided. Field earth cracked and rice plants withered. Most plants in dry fields had withered too and leaves had totally dried and fallen off.

In Limo Kaum village, in the region of Batu Sangkar Minangkabau (currently is included in the Province of West Sumatra), an old woman was sweeping the dusty terrace of her house. Since her house was located near a street, dust was constantly flown to her terrace.

When she was busy sweeping the floor, suddenly a horse cart passed by and flew dust over her house and she had to cover her nose with her hand. When the horsecart had passed, she went on sweeping and cleaning the terrace although she knew that whenever a horsecart passed by it would fly dust over the terrace. The wind also kept blowing the dust and made her terrace constantly dirty.

A moment later, she called up Upik, her daughter, and asked her to take some clean water from the river. She would like to

boil water and make some sweet tea. She also wanted to cook rice. Before calling up her daughter, she went to the side of the house to make sure that she still had adequate rice stock in the barn.

She really did not believe that the food stock had subsided. The rice in the bags would only be enough for the next few days. She only had less supply of side dish too while the dry season would last longer. It would end in several months ahead.

Then he collected some firewood and boiled some drinking water. She still had some water she had taken from the river about several hundred meters away. While wiping off the sweat on her forehead, she took a long breath. She imagined the hard effort of collecting water from the river yesterday.

Her legs were still aching. She thought that she would not be able to do it anymore.

"Huff..., this dry season is really long and troublesome. If my husband were here with me, our life would not have been this hard," she imagined.

She got very sad. What can an old woman do to deal with the hard life in the dry season? Her power was not as strong as the power of a man. Moreover, she still had to bring up her daughter. She had to stand against the searing sunshine and

survive without any rainfall at all.

"Huff...." She took a long breath.

"I have to be perseverant in living this way. God will not give any burden beyond my capacity," she mulled over.

Her tears dropped when she wondered whether she would survive until the end of the dry season. She got unhappier.

If her husband were there, he would have provided everything for her. At least her husband would help her collect water from the river. Without him beside her, she had to assume the whole responsibility and do everything by herself.

His husband went overseas but he had never returned since then. Some people said that he was robbed and killed on the street. Some others said that he was unlucky yet and currently he was collecting some money before he returned. Still, other people said that he was drowned in the sea. She did not know which information was true. It took a long time for her to let the fact go. She did not care about it any longer. She had to survive by herself and brought up her daughter.

She still remembered when Upik was only a little kid. Her husband, Sutan, loved and indulged her daughter very much. It was understandable since Upik was the only child in their family. He always provided whatever Upik asked. She was

really indulged, especially by her husband.

She realized that it spoiled Upik's mental development. However, Sutan insisted to indulge her. Sutan always brought his daughter to the market once a week to buy a new dress. Moreover, when he sold out his livestock and he earned much money, Sutan would extravagantly fulfil whatever her daughter wanted.

He did not allow Upik to do any household chores.

Once when he found Upik boiling some water in the kitchen he got furious. On the very day, he fired the maid supposed to do the household chores.

"Why should I have paid her if Upik still does the household chores?" he claimed.

"Upik, that's not your job, dear. You'll get your hand burnt. Come here. Try this new dress. I just bought it on the market. The seller said that the dress just arrived."

Upik approached her father right away. She took the dress and wore it. She showed it off to her father.

"Wow...my daughter is really beautiful."

Upik swayed her body wearing the new dress.

"Dad, may I go out? I'm going to show it off to the next-door neighbour."

"All right, dear. Yes, you may. But, don't stay outside too long. Okay?"

"Okay, Dad."

Actually, her mother wondered why her husband always indulged her daughter. For her, it would be better if Upik was used to helping her parents do the household chores since it would be good for her. It would be strange if a girl had no experience in such kitchen activities as cooking and making some sauces. However, her husband insisted to forbid Upik doing the household chores.

"Not now. Let her enjoy her beautiful childhood. Later when she has grown up, she will learn how to cook rice, make sauces, and wash the dishes," said him.

She did not talk back since she knew that her husband was stubborn. He would get angry when she protested. Moreover, he was capable of meeting whatever Upik needed. In the kampong, he was known as a livestock merchant who traded cows or buffalos.

However, one day, she heard her husband shouting from the backyard. She rushed to see what was happening. She was

shocked to see her tens of cows in the cage had died. The cows, buffalos, and goats died with strange mucus coming out of their mouths.

The people knew that the cows died of aetiologically unknown and incurable "mad cow disease". Consequently, he went bankrupt and. Since then he daydreamt a lot.

"Don't let Upik know about this problem. She will get sad," said him.

She did not give any comment. She could imagine how depressed Upik would be when she knew that they went bankrupt. Of course, they would not be able to meet her wish any longer.

When Sutan was sitting in the living room and drinking a cup of coffee, Upik showed up.

"Dad, let's go to the market. My friends said that there are some new good dresses."

Sutan was extremely startled and confused at once. He had no money left in his pocket. Then he met his wife in the kitchen.

"Do you still have any money? Upik wants a new dress."

"I have a little," she said.



Then, Sutan and Upik went to the market to buy a new dress, a slayer, and some parcels of food.

Sutan thought, if the hard life lasted longer he would not be able to indulge her daughter any longer. He would have to find another job other than becoming a livestock merchant. But he knew that it would be difficult to get a highly paid job in the village. Most of the people worked as farmers.

"I have to go abroad," said Sutan one day.

His wife was shocked to hear what her husband had said.

"What?" She asked in disbelief.

"I'm going abroad. There will be a ship leaving from Teluk Bayur. I'll leave tomorrow. Don't let Upik know about this. When she asks, just tell her that I'm going to the market to buy a new dress," he asked.

The woman just nodded in agreement since she knew that her husband would mind if she disagreed. In case she prevented him from leaving, her husband would insist to leave. As her husband requested, she did not wake Upik up when her husband left for Padang early morning and took a ship to Java.

"Keep in your mind that while I am overseas, don't be too hard to Upik," said Sutan.

As she always did, she just nodded. Her husband stepped down the house and joined his friends who had been waiting for him outside. Sutan waved his hand and left her. She could not keep her tears from dropping on the farewell day. Then, she returned to the room and rubbed Upik's hair while she was sleeping.

\* \* \*

She went to the field and farm by herself to cultivate them. She hoed the soil and planted some cassava and other plants to get some food. Sometimes, when the crops were ready to be harvested, wild boar came to the field to eat up the crops and destroyed the plants.

When it happened, she had to take every effort to collect the residual cassavas and tubers left by the wild boar.

When the plants in the field had grown, she went to the field and nurtured the plants by herself. She was good at planting, nurturing, and harvesting the rice. Usually, when the harvest time was due, her neighbours came to help her harvest and hull the rice.

The spirit of cooperation was firmly adopted by the people in the village. That was why she was not worried, although she only lived with her daughter. The people would come and help voluntarily.

"Uni, it seems that you have abundant crops this time," said Etek Sari Bulan one day.

"That's right. Thank God."

"It's important to remember that we have to thank God. We have to allocate some of it for tithe," added Etek Sari.

That was how the people live in the kampong. When they had abundant agricultural produce, they would allocate some of them for tithe. Sometimes, they had collective prayers at the mosques to express their gratitude.

It was a nice kampong surrounded by mountains and fields extending below them. The rivers had still clear flowing water in which many kinds of fish could be caught.

\* \* \*

She was indeed a tough woman. She became the family head in charge of earning the livelihood and taking care of the household as well.

"Woman must not be weak," said the woman one time.

Her interlocutor nodded in agreement.

"That's why in Minangkabau we have the Bundo Kandung system," said the woman while collecting firewood in the

forest.

In some other time, she had to collect firewood in the forest, go to the market, or cook in the kitchen by herself since she could not expect any back up from her only daughter. She preferred dressing up to helping her mother. She would certainly refused to help her work in the field or collect water from the river. However, the mother could not be hard on her. Since she had lost her husband, her daughter was all she had.

Again, she checked the rice supply in the bag to ensure that she still had some stock. The stock would only be sufficient for the next three days. The old woman left the rice she was cooking for a moment. She went to the garden behind the house. She took a deep breath there, "Even the cassava doesn't grow at all." Then she returned to her house and called up her only daughter.

"Upik, Upik, have you already taken some water from the river, dear?" she called.

She had called loudly to her daughter, but her daughter did not respond at all.

"Upik...Upik..."

"Upik..."

"Upik...take the bucket soon. Go and collect some water from

the river."

Getting no reply from Upik, the old woman entered the house where she saw her daughter combing her hair and applying facial powder on her cheek. Her daughter was dressing up and enjoying herself with her habit.

"Didn't you hear that I called you?"

Upik did not answer. She even pretended not to hear.

"Upik, do you hear what I have just said?"

"Yes, I do. You are just annoying me. Look at my hair. It's messy again," replied Upik recklessly.

"Upik, have you taken some water from the river as I have instructed? That's the bucket. Go to the river soon."

"Yes, Mom. Wait a minute."

The old woman annoyed with her daughter's attitude. How could her daughter decline the responsibility? However, she did not want to be hard or violent to her daughter. She knew that a child growing up with violence would turn into a violent girl. She realized that such a practice would not be appropriate for her daughter's mental development.

The long dry season had resulted in the scarcity of food

supplies for the people. The people began worrying about the food scarcity. They lived as if they had no hope at all. Indeed, they did not have anything to expect. Nobody would help them in that situation.

"Dear, how poor our fate is! What will we eat?" the old woman said to her only daughter. The girl she called did not give any prompt answer. She kept combing her hair and applying the facial powder on her cheek while happily singing a chant.

"Oh, dear. We've been in such a difficult life, and you are still happily singing a chant," she complained.

The old woman had been very anxious and confused. It was understandable that she got anxious since they were facing a starvation in their life. The long dry season had led to the failure of agricultural harvest that time whereas the harvest would only be due in one or two months.

"If we had planted the rice earlier, the condition would have been much better. However, this is the destiny that the Almighty had set up," she said.

One day, the rice barn had totally run out of rice.

"Dear, how poor our life is! What will we eat?" The old woman talked to her only daughter whom as usual, did not

give any prompt reply. She was combing her hair, applying some facial powder on her cheek, and looking at herself in front of the mirror.

She swayed her body as if she was expecting a royal prince.

"I'm beautiful, aren't I," she said quietly.

"Dear, how is it? Help me now. At least, collect some water from the river," she repeated.

"Oh come on Mom. How will I go to the river? Look at my appearance. What will the people say about me? What will happen if a handsome young man sees me?"

The old woman shook her head in disappointment. She realized that she would not be able to ask for a favour from her daughter any longer. Therefore, she took the pail and left for the river to collect some water.

She walked unsteadily along the pathway. Her leg was still aching because only yesterday she walked along that way.

On her way to the river, she encountered with a number of people who just returned from the river for collecting some water. They told the hardship of life due to the scarcity of food supplies.

"We have almost run out of rice. We have no idea of what we

can do. However, as the traditional leader had said, in one or two days, we're going to the neighbouring villages to borrow some rice," they said.

The river was approximately two hundred meters from their houses. They carried some pails to collect water. Since the water source did not provide much volume of water either, the people collaboratively dug a deep pool in the stream. However, with minimal supply of water, when someone had taken some water from the pool, the remaining water would turn muddy. They had to wait for some time before the water turned clear. It was just that way.

Currently, they just relied on the remaining food stock to survive. Some of them had left the village and gone to another village to borrow rice to suffice their daily need.

In such a long dry season, life was so hard and bitter. It was even harder for the two women. The two of them just lived by themselves. Their extended family had extinct. The family did not have any relative since long time ago. If any, they were only distant relatives. Some others had gone abroad or lived in other villages.

## **II. An Envoy from the Kingdom**

One afternoon, a man named Buyung, who claimed to be authorized to recruit her daughter as a servant in the



Pagaruyung Palace. Buyung's arrival had made Rusma, the old woman, have a great expectation.

It was understandable. She was in a trouble and suddenly a man would recruit her daughter to become a servant in the royal palace. Everybody knew that working in the palace would earn much money and high prestige for the people.

"Look at Dewi Saribalun who lives in the edge of the village. She only began working some time ago, but she can buy her father a buffalo," said Buyung.

The eyes of the old woman were glistening with tears upon hearing what Buyung had said. She did not have any reason for refusing the unexpected good offer.

It meant that her life would be improved. Moreover, most importantly, she would be able to survive in the food scarcity easily.

Buyung gulped his tea again.

"So, what do you think, Bu Rusma? Will you allow Upik to go with me," asked Buyung.

"Certainly. However, I had better ask her in advance," she replied.

Upik was very happy when hearing about that news. She

imagined that soon she would work as a domestic assistant in the palace. Nearly every young woman in her village would have such a dream job.

She almost bounced about when she heard the news. It was like a dream. Her dream would come true.

"In a moment, everybody in this village will look me up. It's of a great advantage that I have been well-groomed so far," she said quietly.

After the guest left, Rusma kept thinking about the offer. Actually, with her poor status, it would be foolish to refuse the offer. However, she wondered how she would live the life when she was separated from her only daughter.

Upik was all she had. It meant that if Upik left, she would live by herself.

No. She would not be able to live separately from Upik. However bad Upik's behaviour was, she loved her. She would not be able to live alone in the house. "I have made up my mind. I'll share happiness and sadness together with her. I'll not let her go," she said quietly.

She stopped daydreaming when Upik showed up from the room.

"Mom ..., let's make a preparation immediately. Please

prepare my clothes. This evening I'm going to the palace," she said.

"Come on Mom; help me arrange the stuff and clothes. I don't want to live in poverty and die of starvation," she continued.

The old woman said nothing. She was shocked to hear what her daughter had said. However, Upik constantly insisted.

"Do you not allow me?" she asked.

"No, Dear. Don't leave. With whom will I live? I don't want to be separated from you."

"Mom ..., I've grown up. Don't rule me that much."

"Upik..., you are my only daughter."

"I want to live a comfortable life just like others. I don't want to live this way. Get off my way."

"Upik? Listen to me."

"Are you jealous with me that you are not young any longer? If you were younger, you would have taken the offer."

"Upik."

"You are selfish."

The old woman said nothing. Upik rushed into her room and

locked the door. She wept with choking sobs. The old woman knocked the door, but she did not open it. She was still sad.

"Shall I allow Upik to go with Buyung who promised her to work in the palace?"

However, the old woman did not tell Upik what she had in her mind.

No. She did not want to part with her beloved daughter. She would not let her daughter go with Buyung and work as a servant in the palace, although she knew that by working in the palace, their life would be much better. However, after losing her husband, she had nobody else but her beloved daughter. However, in the afternoon, her sadness was relieved to hear that Buyung was searched by the kingdom's guard. Actually, Buyung was not an official envoy of the king to recruit servants for the palace.

"Buyung is a deceiver," one of the kingdom's guards said.

"So?" she asked in disbelief.

"Well, currently the kingdom does not need any servant. On the contrary, the king had laid off many servants temporarily due to the difficult economic condition. The long dry season had complicated the condition of our kampong," he said.

"Thank God that I had not allow my daughter to go with

Buyung who promised to recruit her to work in the palace," she said.

Then she called her daughter Upik, to tell the truth. She expected that after hearing the news her daughter would not get angry with her any longer.

"It's right, Upik. We're just searching Buyung and bringing him to appear before the king," the guard said.

Upik nodded her head. However, she persistently sullen as if she did not believe in what she had heard.

She kept expecting that someone would recruit her to work in the palace.

"Does the king not need any servant now?" she asked the guard.

"No. Currently, the economic situation is very hard," one of the guards replied. Then, they left.

"Later when the king needs a servant in the palace, Upik will go there," she said.

Her mother did not reply to what her daughter had said. She shook her head indicating that she did not understand her daughter's way of behaving.

### **III. Food Scarcity was Coming Soon**

The old woman stepped down the house to the rice barn precisely beside her house. She opened the door slowly while expecting that miraculously there was an abundant supply of rice in the rice barn. Of course, there was no miracle and she had run out of rice.

In the corner of the room, she saw some scattered rice. She collected the last stock of rice. The old woman thought hard how to obtain more rice supply. She went to her neighbour's house to borrow rice but unfortunately, they had the same fate. Even worse, some of them had just eaten cassava to substitute the rice simply to make their stomach filled.

She ran to the field behind her house and expected to find some cassava. But she got nothing since the plants did not grow at all due to the long dry season. She got nearly frustrated.

"Upik, we have run out of rice stock. We have to go to Pagaruyung to borrow some rice. Tomorrow morning we have to leave," she said while ignoring her daughter's response. She knew that her daughter would not care about anything but her appearance. She even expected that Buyung would recruit her to work as a servant in the palace. If she were lucky, one of the princes would fall in love with her.

"I tell you what? If I worked in the palace, our condition would not have been this hard," she claimed.

The old woman did not respond. She knew that allowing her daughter to work in the king's palace would even ruin her life. She would have to live alone.

"Upik, tomorrow morning we are going to leave for Pagaruyung. Be prepared," she said.

Although her daughter did not give any response, she had to leave with or without Upik. In the night, she imagined the condition of her relatives in Pagaruyung. In case their condition is just the same as hers, they would certainly not be able to lend her some rice. Then if she did not get rice, how would they live until the end of the scarcity of food supplies? All she could do was passing prayer to God expecting that the condition of their relatives in Pagaruyung was much better.

#### **IV. Traditional Deliberation**

Actually several months after the dry season came, the leaders of the kampong had conducted a deliberation to find the solution. The long dry season and scarcity of food supplies had become serious problems for the people in their kampong. The kampong leader had gathered all community leaders to seek the best possible solution to the problem.

They had a deliberation in the traditional hall, in which the community leaders had a discussion to identify the possible solution to the existing problem.

That morning in the traditional hall, the kampong leader had gathered a number of community leaders to discuss their problem and find the way out. Datuk Tumanggung, the kampong leader, led the meeting.

"The scarcity of food supplies is very severe this time. We are running out of food stock. Such is also the case for the rice stock in the kampong's rice barn. We cannot rely on it any longer.

We cannot develop a public kitchen. What will we cook? The rice plants in the fields withered. The plants in the dry fields failed to grow due to the lack of water. Does anybody have any idea? How come? Why the rice in the kampong's rice barn run out rapidly?"

The audience was quiet. They did not know either why the rice in the kampong's rice barn run out rapidly.

"Has Angku Darajat come? I think he knows about it"

"Angku Darajat has not arrived yet Angku Datuk. I heard he is making a new well on the lower ground behind his house. Perhaps, he is too tired. I think he'll be coming in a moment."



Indeed, the kampong had a traditional rule of reserving some rice to be consumed during the food scarcity. As it had been communally agreed, in every harvest, each person was required to reserve a half bag of rice each to the kampong's collective stock. They developed a rice barn beside the traditional hall to keep the reserved rice supplied by the people who already had rice harvest. Such a practice had multi purposes.

One of them was social and religious purposes. Socially, the purpose of such a practice is to help the people in need. The religious purpose of such a practice was that they could use the rice for any religious programs or activities.

A moment later, Angku Darajat arrived. He looked very tired. Seeing that Angku Darajat was coming, other people gave way to him.

He was one of the influential persons in the kampong. He was in charge of keeping the kampong's properties. Angku Darajat was an integrated and religious person. He entered the hall and sat near Angku Tumanggung. He knew what he had to do after seeing the confused faces of the people in the traditional hall. Certainly, they needed an explanation from him why the food stock in the kampong's rice barn had run out rapidly. Then he described the condition of the kampong's rice barn frankly.

"We have a lower quantity of produce in previous harvest time. Automatically the stock of the kampong's rice barn declines. In addition, we also have taken some rice to help the people in need in another kampong."

The audience understood what Angku Darajat had described. Then they were busy thinking hard about what they could do to deal with the food scarcity problem.

"The point is we could not plant anything because whatever we plant will not grow. Likewise, all fishponds run out of the water. Nobody will buy our agricultural or horticultural produce." The people described the condition further.

It was a complicated and difficult situation. They hardly had any alternative to deal with the scarcity of food supplies.

"If we let this problem continue, our people will die of starvation. We have no alternative and it seems that we have failed to resolve the problem. We have to ask other people's favour. I'll send a number of communal leaders to go to another kampong. We are going to identify which kampongs still have an extra supply of rice. We're going to identify which kampongs already practice the harvest before the coming of the dry season so that they still have adequate rice stock."

"Well, that's a better idea. Our people have been accustomed to help each other. That's why our ancestors regulated the

application of different planting and harvesting sessions in the fields.

When the dry season comes as what we are experiencing now, some other kampongs have harvested earlier that they did not suffer from the negative impact of the dry season. Just imagine that if all kampongs plant rice at the same time and harvest at the same time. When the dry season comes, we may die of starvation," he said.

Then Angku Datuk assigned a number of delegates to go to other kampongs to identify which kampongs already harvested before the coming of the dry season. They would like to borrow rice to anticipate the coming of the food scarcity.

"However we have to remember that we should not eat up the rice that we borrow. Leave half of them to become the seed that we will plant. One day when our relatives in other kampong need rice, we will help them," Datuk Tumanggung continued.

"When will we leave and who will leave?" Datuk Sori of Caniago ethnic asked.

"All ethnic leaders will be assigned to go to other kampongs that have a close ethnic association," Datuk Tumanggung said.

"All right, Angku," other persons said.

"Tomorrow morning we're leaving," he confirmed.

Temporarily, the food scarcity problem had been resolved by the agreed idea in the traditional deliberation in the kampong. Then, they had deliberation to find the water sources for the people.

Deliberation has been mandatory in Minangkabau tradition. The people have deliberation to discuss various issues of the kampong. No decision is made without previous deliberation. Even, people have deliberation in domestic matters. Whatever they do and however small the matter is, they have to discuss it in a consensus. Deliberation is needed to share ideas and thought. In addition, the decision made in the deliberation is strongly bound. At least, people will not protest the decision since they were engaged in the decision-making. The persons whose idea is not approved will still accept the deliberative decision.

For example, people have deliberation in the program of community self-help. They usually had a meeting in advance when and what they will do. Therefore, the decision made is the result of the meeting. Therefore, everybody has the sense of responsibility to carry out the decision. Nobody feels that he or she is disadvantaged.

That is it. All decisions in the tradition of Minangkabau are

made by traditional deliberation. This is in line with the customary wise words of the consistent agreement through deliberation. It implies that people's ideas and thoughts will be discussed in the deliberation to result in an agreement.

Even the decision made by the king is always preceded by deliberation. The king in Minangkabau adopts the system of deliberation for a unanimous decision. He does not make any arbitrary decision. What the king decides represents the desire of many people. It is a collective decision rather than the king's individual decision.

In the deliberation, the people will learn how to propose their ideas to the public. They will have to learn how to propose or oppose ideas politely to keep other people from being offended.

Such a way is also applied in the deliberation to find the water source for the people.

"Does anybody know how to find the water source for our community recently?" Angku Tumanggung asked.

"Excuse me, Angku Datuk. Considering the fact that our springs have lacked of water while our wells and lakes have dried up, we have to develop an alternative water source. At least the water will be sufficient for drinking water," a man at the back line said.

"What do you think if we build a large pool Angku Datuk? We dig a deeper well?" another man said.

"It seems that digging a rather larger pool will need much more time, energy, and cost. It will take longer time as well and we are not sure if we will get any water."

"That's right," another man confirmed.

"Is there anybody else having another solution?"

"We have to look for a deeper river to make a dam. We need a deeper river pool to reserve drinking water for us," still another man proposed.

"What do you think?" Angku Datuk asked.

Some people said no word but some others agreed.

"I agree with Angku Datuk. It's the suitable way for now."

"All right. Let's discuss the technical matters later," Angku Datuk ended the deliberation that noon.

The ethnic leaders attending the meeting nodded their heads and they looked enthusiastic listening to the description. It seemed that there was no other way for them to get some water.

It was decided at that time that they would look for the rivers

that had deep pools. They would dig the pools deeper to collect more water. The people would be able to collect water from the pool. Therefore, as decided in the deliberation, they collectively walked along the rivers in the kampong to identify the parts that had a deeper pool with abundant water.

Along the way of exploring the rivers, they felt so sad. Usually the river had fast current, but currently, the river had run out of water. They kept exploring to the upstream. Finally, they found what they were looking for, a river pool filled with some water. The pool could be widened and deepened to collect much water.

Then, Angku Datuk announced to all that they had found a river pool and the next day they would like to have a voluntary labour service to enlarge the river pool.

Providing a voluntary labour service is another characteristic of the people of Minangkabau. They do something collectively. Not only do they do the public work collectively, but they also do the personal work collectively. When someone develops a house, the neighbours will come to voluntarily assisted.

"It's far away. It's approximately two hundred meters from our home. But, that's the only river pool that we have," said Angku Datuk.

The people affirmed. The next day they collaboratively enlarged the river pool. By doing so, they would get much more drinking water from the pool.

"Do you think our work will be successful?" Angku Datuk asked.

"Hopefully yes, Angku Datuk," Angku Darajat answered.

Then, Angku Datuk stepped forward. He stood in front of the people performing the voluntary labour service and announced that the people would collect water from the pool. It was advisable that the people collect water alternately, considering the fact that the pool only contained a limited supply of water.

"Before the rainy season comes, this is what we can do. We have to thank God that, amidst the hardship, we still have a solution for all of us."

After that, they passed collective prayers expecting that the work would be accomplished well before they returned home.

They began enlarging the river pool. First, they cleared up the bushes along the riverside. Then, they dug the central part in which the water was collected. They picked up some rocks and arranged them at the riverside.

"Come on. We have to work enthusiastically!"



"Okay!"

"Hey, you there. Move the sands aside and lift the rocks," one of the men instructed.

"All right," the men replied.

They worked enthusiastically.

Other people made a pathway and cleared up the bushes along the way to the river.

"Fill the hollowed part of the way with sands and rocks," Angku Datuk shouted.

"All right, Datuk."

They worked for nearly a half day. All people in the kampong worked collaboratively to dig the pool in the centre of the river.

"Look, the water is whelming. Hurray ...."

Some men touched the water with their hands and splashed the water on the other men beside them.

"Hey, don't splash water on me."

"Don't splash."

"Hey, you. I'll give you a return splash later."

"Ha ha ha ...."

"Ha ha ha ...."

They laughed happily.

"Datuk, the water is still muddy."

"Give some rather large pebbles on the bottom to filter the mud from the water," Datuk instructed.

When they were about to return home, they were surprised to hear someone shouting.

"Look. A deer!"

"There's a deer."

"There's a deer."

"A deer."

"Come on. Let's surround the deer," Angku Datuk instructed.

"Pirin, go home now. Take our dog and bring it here. We are going to hunt it before it entered the forest again."

"All right, Dad. I'll go home now," Pirin obeyed his father's instruction.

Then he returned home to take his dog. The dog has been

accustomed to be engaged in the hunting of wild boar.

Like hungry lions, they competed to run after the deer. They made a strategy to encircle it. Finally, they managed to lead the deer to the open space. If the deer entered the forest, the people would not have been able to find it.

The people who surrounded the deer looked for a lasso. They successfully snared the deer's neck. The deer was entrapped. They slaughtered the deer and shared the meat with all of the people.

"This is the mercy of Allah SWT because we live in a harmony without any quarrel or dispute among us," Angku said.

The people returned home happily. They were enthusiastically would inform the good news to their wife at home. At least, that night they could eat deer's meat.

## **V. Leaving for Pagaruyung**

Following other people already borrowing some rice to the neighbouring kampongs, Ibu Rusma did accordingly. She had to hurriedly leave for Pagaruyung to meet her distant relatives.

Then the next morning the two women left for Pagaruyung to borrow some rice from their relatives in Pagaruyung.

They brought whatever they had for their journey.

They left early morning to avoid the searing heat on the way. Walking in the direct sunlight would be exhausting, particularly for a woman of her age.

Upik was wearing a nice kebaya and applied some facial powder on her face, while the old woman was only wearing her only old dress. The old woman wondered with the attitude of her daughter. However, she did not want to reprimand her. If she reprimanded or warned her to do so, her daughter would probably mop around and refused to go along. She needed her daughter very much to help her carry the rice later.

Therefore, she just looked at her daughter's whims. She dressed up as if she would like to go to a party.

They left their home. The old woman walked ahead, while Upik walked behind her. Feeling ashamed, Upik refused to walk beside her mother.

She thought that her beauty and charm would fade away if she walked beside her mother. Sometimes she walked behind and some other times she walked in front of her mother. During the journey, she acted as if she did not know the woman. When they had to take a rest at the side of the road due to the severe exhaustion, she refused to sit beside her mother.

"Hey, Upik, why have you let your mother walk alone," a woman encountering with them on the way reprimanded her. Upik did not reply.

Her cynical face and expressionless smile made the woman embarrassed.

Under the terribly hot direct sunlight, the two women kept walking. Their steps turned unsteady. Then a horsecart overtook them. The old driver of the horsecart offered the old woman to go along with him. However, she declined the offer since there was not enough space at the back part of the cart for both of them.

Moreover, she pitied the buffalo which was short of breath due to the searing heat.

"No, Mak (mamak). I pity your buffalo."

Ibu Rusma declined the offer since there was not enough space for both of them. Besides, she was acquainted with the horsecart driver. What would people say if she went along with him on the horsecart?

Since the old woman declined the offer, the horsecart driver offered Upik to get on. "Hi Upik, come on. Go along with me," he said to Upik.

The old woman was surprised to hear the offer. She warned

her daughter to decline the offer. However, Upik had got on the horsecart with her nice smile. She was acquiescent to leave her mother walking alone.

"Why should I walk under the sun," she said.

"Oh my God. What's wrong with me? Why has my daughter rebelled? What's wrong with me? Why has she grown into such a rebellious daughter? Why has she treated me like a stranger?" she lamented.

She kept walking alone on the hot and quiet road. Occasionally she encountered with some people on the way. When she was tired, she sat. After that, she went on the journey with a great expectation.

She arrived at Pagaruyung when it was nearly midday. She saw her daughter sitting in a food stall. She was drinking some hot tea and talam cake. She got anxious and confused how her daughter would pay for the drink and cake since she knew that her daughter did not have any money.

"Come on, we are close to Uni Rubiah's house," she said to her daughter. Her daughter acted as if she did not hear what her mother had said. She just followed her mother.

In the meantime, the woman did not want to ask how her daughter earned the money. She thought that the kind driver of

the horsecart had paid her food and drink. How kind the old man was.

The house of Uni Rubiah, who was her distant relative, lied behind the Market of Pagaruyung. The market was very crowded at that time. The dry season and food scarcity had made public purchasing power declined. Before she reached the house of Uni Rubiah, she saw the horsecart driver who had given a ride to her daughter. He was sitting in a food stall having a conversation with a number of men there.

"Thank you for giving a ride to my daughter," she said.

"Oh, it's you Uni. That's all right, Uni. We have to help each other. I just pitied Uni walking alone," he said.

"This afternoon I'm going to another kampong. It's a pity that I cannot give you a ride Uni," he said.

"That's all right, Mamak. We can go home on foot," she replied.

The food stall owner heard their conversation.

"Oh, that's you Uni," the stall owner greeted her.

The old woman whispered the hostile-look owner of the stall. He looked like a parewa, a street corner loafer in the kampong. After they left, the stall owner talked to the horsecart driver.

"Look Sutan. The woman recently talking to you is my distant relative. Thank you for your help, Sutan," he said.

Sutan, the horsecart driver, felt awkward. Haltingly, he replied.

"That's all right, Parewa. Your relative is mine too."

"Oh, come on, Sutan. Let's have a drink again. Ha ha ha ...."

"Ha ha ha...."

Then, they got involved in a further conversation on other topics. Meanwhile, the old woman and Upik went to the house of Uni Rubiah.

"Assalamualaikum, peace be to you"

"Wa alaikum salam, peace be to you too. Oh, that's you Uni. Come in, please Uni," someone welcomed them.

The old woman entered the house while Upik still grumbled angrily outside of the house. She refused to enter the house along with her mother. She just sat on the house stairs.

"Upik, it's indecent for a girl to sit at the house stairs. Come in," she said.

Upik did not give any response.

"How is it going in Limo Kaum?"



The old woman needed some time to answer. She was hesitated and anxious. Even worse, she was very afraid that she would be unable to say what she was supposed to say.

"Come on, Uni. At least we in Pagaruyung have heard about you from the incoming merchants. We know that the long dry season and food scarcity are threatening you. I have prepared one bag of rice and two heads of chicken for you. Now Uni. Have some meals first."

The old woman could not keep her tears from dropping. She expressed her gratitude to her relative.

"How can I repay your kind help?" she asked.

"Don't take it seriously, Uni. We are accustomed to helping each other, aren't we? Our ancestors have taught us to practice this since the ancient time."

The old woman's tears dropped steadily. She was upset. Metaphorically, she was a dry field receiving sudden rainwater.

"If later Pagaruyung suffers from a scarcity of food supplies, we will have to borrow rice from Limo Kaum. It's an advantage that we have different harvesting seasons. How intelligent our ancestors were!"

That's the tradition of the community in Batu Sangkar. Every area has different schedules of agricultural harvest. One of the objectives is that they can help each other. When an area suffers from the scarcity of food supplies due to the undue harvest, they will borrow rice from other areas and vice versa.

The habit of mutual help and reciprocal borrowing among the areas has been practiced since the ancient time. Although they live in different kampongs, genealogically, they belong to the same family tree.

## **VI. Going Home**

After enjoying the served meals and taking adequate rest, Ibu Rusma and her daughter took leave to go home to Limo Kaum. She would take a long way to return home. The journey at midday would be harder than the morning journey. The weather was much hotter. However, since they had what they wanted they felt happy. Therefore, they found it easy to carry a bag of rice and two heads of chicken.

Then she carried the rice on her head and held the two chickens in her hand.

"Dear, let's go home now," the old woman said to Upik.

"Upik, help your mother carry the chicken," Uni Rubiah said to Upik. Upik was initially unwilling to give a hand. However,

she finally was willing to carry the chicken.

Only a few moments after leaving the house, the chicken struggled to get loose. To keep the chickens from constant jumping and escaping, Upik grabbed the chicken's stomach firmly. Because she pressed the chicken's stomach too hard, the chicken stomach released the faeces. It almost splashed on Upik's dress.

"Owwf...owwf .... It's so disgusting!"

It happened so suddenly. Upik's eyes were opened wide. She shouted when the chicken faeces almost splashed her dress and her nails. Her sharp nails scratched her light skin and resulted in a skin rash.

A number of young men who happened to see that incidence roared with laughter. Upik was very embarrassed with the incidence. Her face was flushed with embarrassment. She did not dare to look at them. Initially, she expected that the young men would admire her. However, with such an incidence, her expectation would not come true. Even worse, she was embarrassed by the chickens.

She got angry and grumbled along the way. She refused to carry the chicken any longer. She was about to throw the chicken away. Fortunately, her mother forbade her to do so. Then she submitted the two chickens to her mother. Therefore,

her mother had to carry a bag of rice on her head and carried two chickens in her hand.

Ibu Rusma looked in trouble since she had to carry the rice and chicken at once. However, since she was already happy after obtaining some rice, she found it easy. Actually, she expected Upik to help her. However, after the incidence, it would be impossible for her to ask Upik to give a hand.

On the way, she felt very thirsty and tired. Then, she sat on the side of the road. She drank the beverage given by Uni Rubiah. She took a deep breath and fell asleep.

Upik, while previously walked behind her mother, kept on walking although she knew that her mother was falling asleep. She walked slowly.

"Upik .... Upik ...."

She heard her mother calling behind her. However, she ignored her mother's call. She pretended that she did not hear since she knew that her mother would ask her to carry the chicken. Or else, she would have to carry the rice on her head.

"How can such this beautiful girl carry some rice? It will spoil my dress," she said.

"Upik .... Upik ...."

Upik went on ignoring her mother's call. She kept walking slowly. Feeling afraid that her daughter would leave her alone, finally, Ibu Rusma went on walking following her daughter.

She already looked tired. Her legs were aching. However, she kept on walking while carrying the heavy burden under the direct sunlight on the dusty road.

Under the searing sunlight, the two women did not walk side by side. Sometimes the old woman walked ahead and some other times, Upik walked ahead. Upik refused to walk side by side with her mother. She felt ashamed. She felt even more ashamed after the incidence of the chicken struggling to get loose.

On the way, they encountered with several neighbour people.

"Hi, Ibu Rusma. Why are you carrying the rice yourself? Who is the girl walking behind you? Why isn't she helping you? How pity you are. You are already old but you still have to carry a heavy burden yourself," they asked.

"That's my daughter," she answered.

"Why isn't she helping you to carry the rice? She is still young and strong."

Ibu Rusma did not reply. She said no word.

It was impossible for her to say that Upik had been unwilling to help carry the rice. She did not want to embarrass her own daughter in front of the people.

Moreover, it would embarrass herself too. It meant that if she told them the fact, she would embarrass herself since Upik was her daughter. It would imply that she had failed to educate her own daughter.

When the people encountered with Upik, they asked the same question.

"Hi, Upik, who is the old woman in front of you? Is she your mother? Why don't you help her carry the rice?"

"Which old woman?" Upik pretended that she did not see her.

"The old woman in front of you. The woman carrying the rice bag and chicken."

"Which one?" she asked and tried to show nice whims. She realized that among them there was a handsome young man. She did not want to embarrass herself by acknowledging that the old woman was her own mother.

"The woman ahead," they replied rather peevishly since they knew that Upik had pretended not to see her.

"Oh, that woman. She's not my mother," she said rather loudly.

"What?"

"No, she's not my mother. She's my maid. I'm the daughter of rich parents. My father and my mother stay at home," she answered arbitrarily.

The people who asked her got shocked by such an answer. They remembered that when they asked the old woman, she said that Upik was her daughter.

The people passed by with such feelings of wonder, irritation, and pity to see the old woman who had to carry the heavy burden under the searing heat of sunlight.

Her mother who was not far ahead of her heard what she had just said. She was shocked. She did not expect that her daughter would have such an attitude. She was very sad.

She did not mind carrying the heavy burden by herself. However, she was offended to hear her daughter's claim that she was only her servant instead of her mother by blood. Her tear dropped uncontrollably. She wept along the way.

"Oh God, why is my daughter that rebellious? Why has she denied me to be her mother? What's wrong with me in educating her, oh My God? "

She attempted to be stiff and pretended that she did not hear what Upik had just said. She did not want her daughter to be

curious that she heard what her daughter had said. Anyhow, she still loved her daughter.

In that condition, she remembered the indulging treatment to her daughter when she was a kid. Moreover, Sutan, her husband, loved her very much. He had spoiled her daughter. She thought that such an indulging treatment had spoiled the character of her daughter.

When they had a good economic condition, it would be all right to indulge the child. However, in such a difficult economic condition, the woman regretted that they had failed to teach life independence to her daughter.

She regretted, but it was too late. It would be difficult to change her daughter's character already implanted since she was only a young child. She turned into a lazy, indulged, and selfish girl. She failed to be self-reliant at all and she grumbled a lot. She was very fragile.

She knew that such a bad character resulted from her improper moral education. Her tear dropped when she remembered that condition. She expected that the time could be reset to the time when her daughter was still a little kid. She would educate her properly. She would teach her self-reliance to her daughter.



However, it was no use crying over the spilled milk. Time could not be reset to the past. She realized that she harvested what she had grown in the past. Slowly she turned around and looked at her daughter. Her daughter had turned into an unstable person. It all resulted from the improper education when she was young.

"God.... My God, forgive me. Show the right way to my daughter. Transform her into a devoted child." She wept along the way.

## **VII. Drowning in the Pool**

The old woman kept walking along the dusty road under the searing sunlight. It was not possible for her to take a long rest since she still had to take a long way home. Because she got tired, she walked more slowly. Sometimes, Upik went ahead of her. Without saying anything, she kept walking in front of her mother. The old woman had run out of the drinking water. She was so thirsty and tired as well. She did not encounter with other people to whom she expected to ask for some water.

In the crossroad, she regained her spirit since she saw a mini pool ahead. The people called it sapan. It had some clear water. It was said that the pool never runs out of water in spite of the dry season.

The old woman stopped near the pool. Upik, who was thirsty,

stopped there too. However, Upik did not say even a single word to her mother.

She was still irritated since she was embarrassed in front of the young men. She still could not understand why her mother asked her to carry the chicken where there were a number of handsome young men. How embarrassed she had been.

"Upik, stop for a while. Wash your face," she said.

Upik did not reply.

"Upik..."

Her daughter persistently did not answer.

"I'll get into the pool."

The old woman got into the side of the pool. She washed her face and drank some water from the pool.

Then she splashed the pool water on her face to refresh. She had been in the pool for a long time. Again she splashed the cold water onto her face. She was like a traveller who found a water pool in the hot desert.

She enjoyed that moment. She did not believe in what she had. That was understandable since, in her kampong, people had difficulties to get some water. It was unbelievable that she

found a clear-water pool.

Since she already felt cold and her thirst had been satisfied, she got out of the pool. It was Upik's turn to get into the side of the pool. She washed her face. She took some water and drank it until she was satiated. She was very happy to find the water since she had suffered from thirst and tire along the way.

She felt the cool sensation in the cold-water pool. Her body felt comfortable. She thought the pool was shallow since she could see the base of the pool. Then she stepped into the centre of the mini pool. However, when she walked to the centre, she slipped and she got drowned into the water.

It occurred too fast that her body soon disappeared. The chickens flew over before being drowned in the water.

"Mom...Help! Mom...Help! Help Upik, Mom!"

"My daughter...."

"Mom...."

"Forgive me, Mom."

"My daughter ...."

"I've been rebellious to you. Forgive me, Mom."

"My daughter...."

The old woman attempted to save her daughter by getting into the water. However, she failed. Upik had disappeared because she was drowned in the pool water. The old woman's weak body failed to reach her daughter's body.

She screamed and asked for help but nobody heard. Nobody passed by the road either.

Her daughter had totally drowned and disappeared in the mini pool. She sobbed beside the pool. Although the pool had some clear water, she failed to see the body of her daughter in the pool.

"Upik .... Upik ...."

Mom, help. Help, Mom..."

She still heard her daughter's scream for help from the pool base. However, she did not see her daughter's body any longer. The pool water turned muddy. It looked as if it was boiling.

"My daughter ...."

"Mom, help...."

The old woman sobbed. She did not believe what had just occurred. She sat beside the pool. She kept trying to get into the pool to save her daughter. However, she did not dare. The pool water was rolling and she was scared.

Then she sat and submitted her fate to God while calling out her daughter's name.

"Upik .... Upik ...."

"Mom, help ...." Upik's voice faded away.

"Upik ...."

"Mom ...."

"Get out, my daughter. Extend your hand."

However, her daughter's voice had faded away totally. The mini pool had totally swallowed Upik's body.

"No .... My daughter .... Get out of the pool, my daughter."  
She fell unconscious.

Perhaps, Upik was drowned by the pool because she was cursed for having offended her mother. The old woman still heard Upik's scream and lamentation vaguely from the base of the pool. Then suddenly, boiling water bubbles appeared in the pool.

The ancestors said that the boiling water was actually the tear of Upik and the chicken. Therefore, when people call out "Coo" like the way they called out the chicken, the water would boil.

"Coo...."

"Coo..."

The water boiled.

Currently, the pool is in Nagari Limo Kaum in Batu Sangkar.

The lesson we can take from the story is that children have to obey their parents. The pool had drowned the rebellious daughter who refused to give a hand to relieve her mother's trouble. It was too late for her to regret what she had done. God had punished her because she was rebellious to her parents.

*Remark:*

*This story is developed from the folklore currently told in Batu Sangkar.*

*Mamak : address for uncle in Minangkabau*

*Uni : address for an older woman*