



Research Paper

Local Wisdoms of Batagak Pangulu Tradition in Minangkabau

Mhd. Isman¹, Robert Sibarani², Ikhwanuddin Nasution³, T. Tyrhaya Zein⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Post-Graduate Department Of Linguistics, Faculty Of Social Sciences, University Of Sumatera Utara

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ABSTRACT: *The tradition of Batagak Pangulu is one of traditional ceremonies as well as rituals in Minangkabau. Literally, batagak means 'inauguration' and pangulu 'village head' so batagak pangulu is meant to mark the giving of so prestigious title as great prince to a local man that he is then appointed the "village head" formally. The giving of the title is also marked by slaughtering a buffalo. Pangulu in Minangkabau society is considered the designation to niniak mamak or ninik mamak 'indigenous stakeholders' who holds Datuak (progenitor); this Datuak leads his people according to the maternal line. The purpose of this study is to find some local wisdoms in this tradition. The research method is emics which covers data collection, participant observation, interviews, and documentation and analysis of qualitative data. This research shows some of the following findings: (i) mutual cooperation, (ii) deliberation and consensus, (iii) harmony and conflict resolution, (iv) truth and justice, (v) politeness, (vi) commitment, (vii) harmony, (viii) management of gender, and (ix) social solidarity.*

Keywords: *Batagak pangulu tradition, local wisdom, ninik mamak*

I. INTRODUCTION

Minangkabau, like other regions in Indonesia, possesses oral traditions that still exist to these days. Such tradition can be found in almost evenly across the Minangkabau regions. Some of Minangkabau traditions include, for example, (a) local verbal and literacy, (b) local literature, (c) performance and folk games, (d) *adat* ceremonies and rituals, (e) traditional technology, (f) figurative or symbolism, (g) art and folk music, (h) traditional agriculture, (i) handicrafts, (j) a culinary or traditional food, (k) traditional medicine, and (l) panorama or local conditions.

Batagak pangulu is also one of them. This ceremony is held at rumah gadang kaum 'people's long house' or at adat house 'customs hall'. Its main purpose is to inaugurate new batagak pangulu since the old one dies or becomes elderly so that he can no longer perform his duties. He is then replaced by his nephew who is named as prince. Other purpose of this inauguration can also mean that members of the tribe have been evolving so they want to separate from the main pangulu and choose new pangulu. This inauguration might also happen when the new pangulu is not inaugurated sometimes after the former pangulu's death and this situation is called the postponement of inauguration to new pangulu. The postponement could be caused by the disagreement among the people to the successor or the successor-to-be is not given birth. The last purpose of the inauguration could be caused by the mistake the pangulu does so his good name and people's esteem become bad and this causes him to be replaced (Dirajo, 2009: 183-188^[1]; see also Toeah, 1985: 66-67^[2]; Piliang and Sungut, 2014: 217-222^[3]).

Batagak pangulu tradition is also called *malewakan gala pangulu* 'the inauguration of adat title' or *Baralek pangulu* 'pangulu feast' which becomes the traditionally enormous ceremony and costs big money of reaching to about one hundred millions rupiah or more. Because of this big money, the pangulu and his people who are under privileged will not be able to carry out the enauguration of money although, in fact, such ceremony owns values and local wisdom. The values and norms in the Batagak pangulu are very useful for Minangkabau and can be manifested in the form of local wisdom. The embodiments of local wisdom in the midst of the community can bring peace and prosperity (Sibarani, 2012: 111).^[4] The existence of pangulu in Manangkabau is meant to create prosperity and peace in the society.

The norms and values of this tradition can be seen from the performance containing the elements of text, co-text, and context. These three elements, if they are explored, will generate values of local wisdom. The values of local wisdom are believed to be true and become a reference in everyday behavior. This tradition

*Corresponding Author: Mhd. Isman¹

^{1,2,3,4} Post-Graduate Department of Linguistics, Faculty Of Social Sciences, University Of Sumatera Utara

consists of local wisdom (Isman, 2014a^[5]; 2014b^[6]) and this local wisdom should be maintained (Isman, 2015^[7]) because it brings peace and prosperity for society. The existence of pangulu in Manangkabau is, however, meant to create prosperity and peace.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Local wisdom

Local wisdom basically consists of values prevailing in a society. These values are believed to be true and become a reference in everyday behavior. Therefore, it is reasonable that Greertz (in Ridwan, 2007^[8]) states that local knowledge is a crucial entity for human dignity in its community. This means that local wisdom which contains elements of creative intelligence and local knowledge from the elites and their people is decisive in the development of civilized society. The term local knowledge is differently defined by experts, for example, local wisdom (Sartini, 2004^[9], Ridwan, 2007) and local genius (Gobyah, 2003^[10]). Local wisdom consists of two words (Syadily, 1992) and is understood as local ideas containing of wisdom and good value embedded and followed by its supporters (see Sartini, 2004, Sibarani, 2012:112^[11]). Meanwhile, the term local genius (or local intelligence) is meant to refer to an ability and intelligence of local communities in their everyday life and consists of the following characteristic capabilities: (1) to withstand from foreign cultures, (2) to accomodate the elements of foreign cultures, (3) to have control, (4) and to give direction to the development of culture (Sibarani, *ibid*:122).

Local wisdom and local knowledge which are utilized to improve the welfare and create peace in society are merely the dream truth (Sibarani, *ibid*:111). In addition, Sibarani(*ibid*:112) states that such local wisdom might be obtained from oral tradition or cultural traditions which have been passed down from generations to generations and can be used to organize life or to adjust the order of community life as shown in Fig. 1.

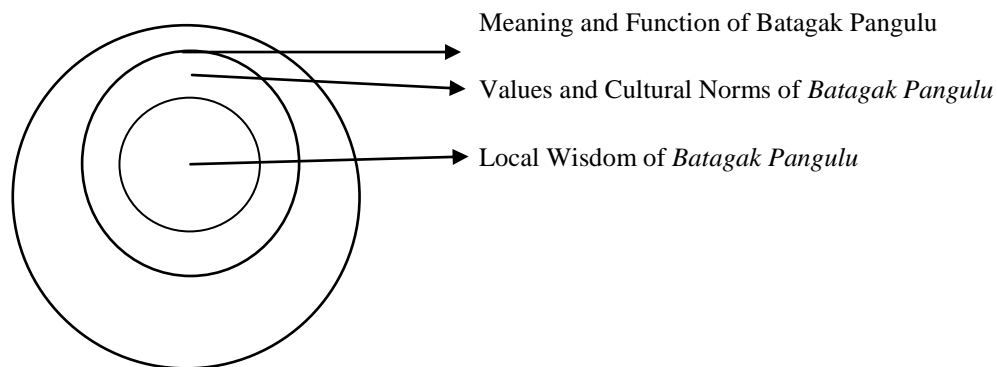


Figure 1. Layers of meaning in Batagak Pangulu

2.2 Batagak pangulu

Pangulu (village head) is addressed to niniak mamak ‘indigenous stakeholders’ who holds Datuak (majesty). The term pangulu comes from the word *hulu* ‘upstream’ which is then interpreted as head or leader (Amir, 2011:67).^[12] Thus, the pangulu is considered the same as secular leader. He is responsible for and obliged to preserve the members of his tribe, his tribe, and villages ‘nagari’ as well as the treasures owned by his people. He is also responsible for solving problems in the community. In this case, all this becomes his obligation as expressed in the following saying: *kusuik manyalasaikan, karuah mampajaniah* ‘to finish the complicated threads and to clear the murky water’.

The pangulu whose position is not the same as the one of a feudal is not inherited to his son(s) but to his nephew who comes from the same blood as his one. Since he is appointed by his people so his position is always described as *tumbuhnyo ditanam, gadangnya diambar, tingginyo dianjuang* ‘its growth is planted, its width like a prestige, its height like a bow window’. This saying means that when someone has been appointed a pangulu, he is chosen by his people’s agreement. Before being appointed, he is great and high in the eyes of his people. Because of his plus value, he deserves to hold such position. His greatness is described as *tingginyo manyintak rieh* ‘his greatnes touches the phalanx’ (Dirajo, 2009:172). Batagak pangulu is the inaugural ceremony or the opening degree of greatness prince. This ceremony aims to inform the public crowded the one who has to wear the title of the greatness of his people. The ceremony or inaugural prince is the largest Minangkabau traditional events for the inauguration or this inaugural slaughtered buffalo and could be implemented to days depending on the ability of the family who held the event.

As a ceremony and an inauguration of giving title to a pangulu, this tradition is aimed at informing society about somebody who receives such title. Although this tradition is indigenous, it is very sacred because it comes from local wisdom and has big responsibility. Minangkabau people know that the task of a pangulu is

*Corresponding Author: Mhd. Isman¹

very noble, known as six dignities, namely, (i) kusuik nan akan manyalasaikan, karuah nan akan manjaniahkan 'to finish the complicated threads and to clear the murky water', (ii) manjunjuang tinggi undang-undang 'uphold the laws', (iii) mamaliharo anak kamakan, nagari, adaik (care for nephews, country, brothers and sisters), (iv) menjunjung tinggi undang-undang 'uphold laws', (v) memelihara anak kamenakan 'care for children nephews', (vi) memelihara nagari dan adat 'maintain village and customs'. This ceremony is attended by ninik mamak pucuk adat, ninik mamak empat suku, ninik mamak di lingkungan kagarian, manti, malin, bundo kanduang, as well as anak nagari. All these are called adaik salingka nagari 'adat circle in the country-level'.

There are eleven causes why this ceremony is held. First is mati batungkek budi (death in favorable stick), meaning that when a pangulu dies, his successor should be found on the same day. The ceremony is held in the tanah tasirah (graveyard). Terms of appointment are agreed and approved by all adat and country pangulu. Second refers to iduik bakarilaan (live in sincere), that is, the pangulu who will be replaced, soon resigns. There are four reasons why a pangulu is reshuffled: (1) he is in the elderly age so he is not capable to run his duties, (2) sick, (3) his successor can be accompanied, guided, and equipped with knowledge so that he could someday be independent when the former dies, and (4) to create smooth succession because the old pangulu has charisma and authority of appointing his successor while he is still alive.

The third correlates to baju salai dibagi duo (clothes with two division), that is, the appointment of pangulu occurs when a single majority of people decided to separate into two. This happens because the people are growing in number so a pangulu feels difficult to give service to all of his people. This situation seems to be same as a proverb: lurah tak taturuni, bukit tak tadaki (village leader can not be generated, and a hill can not be climbed on); as a result, a new pangulu is needed. The fourth cause is described traditionally as mangambang nan talipek (expansion but folded); this means that when a pangulu dies but there is no agreement among people about who will be chosen, so there is a delay of successor appointment until a new agreement is reached. This condition is described as "pangulu title is folded".

The fifth is related to the concept of gadang menyimpang (big but deviated) which is meant to describe a situation in which most members of a pangulu show their separation and need a new pangulu institution. This condition might happen when the amount of members of a pangulu have grown up bigger. Or, this might also happen because of many members live separately in new areas. Pangulu title can be new or old one depending on the agreement. While, the sixth is related to the notion of mangguntiang siba baju (cutting the scattered clothes) which is marked by the appointment of a new pangulu starting from no deal and even leading to irreconcilable dispute between two or more parties. The old pangulu remains to hold his title and runs his nagari in the proper rules; meanwhile, the new pangulu also holds his title in accordance with the principles of kinship and treasures and is supported morally by his nephews. This new pangulu is described as ganggam bauntuak (to hold with a purpose).

The seventh cause correlates to the concept of manurunkan nan tagantuang (to get off the hanging) which is meant to inaugurate the delayed candidate of pangulu. The delay is caused by a condition where people are not ready with finance to perform the ceremony or with the absence of the candidate. About the eighth cause, it is concerned with the concept of mambangkik batang tarandam (to remove the soaked rod) which is caused by a condition where a pangulu can not be inauguated for decades because of the following factors: (1) the new pangulu candidate is none (because nephew with the same blood is unavailable except a niece) although the old pangulu was died (yet nephew roped blood that is only niece); as a result, waiting for new baby born nephew should be carried out; and (2) the pangulu title is folded for a long time since the disputed parties do not cooperate and disagree to seek the way out. A deal then appears after a new generation comes up and the form of the agreement is related to the concept of baju salai dibagi duo. People then come back to the correct track.

Baju basasah (the washed clothes) becomes the characteristics of the ninth cause which is characterized by the inauguration of new pangulu to replace the old one who breaks laws, for instance, stealing, deceiving, always getting drunk, and other criminal acts. All these acts bring bad impacts of the pangulu's name and his people. Wise people will then replace him with a new one who is still pure. With reference to the tenth cause, that is rabuak bagantiak (dust on the little finger), the inauguration of new pangulu is carried out because the old one broke adat rules seriously and he is therefore replaced. This replacement is based on the Peradilan Adat Nagari (Adat Nagari Court). The punishment might include (1) to clean his name and hold a meal ceremony by slaughtering goats, cows, buffaloes, or others in accordance with the indigenous provisions and then he can still become a pangulu if he broke minor criminals and (2) to replace the old pangulu in case of serious acts.

The eleventh cause refers to the concept of bungo bakarang (to compose flowers) which is meant to inaugurate new pangulu because the amount of people has grown up and they spread in various areas. As a result, it is difficult to manage the pangulu territory. In the concept of kepenghuluan nan saindu (under the same institution), two pangulu territories would be divided into three and so on. Under this new order management, a nephew will move to a new territory and this transformation is possible because of natural condition and location of settlements. Before the inauguration of pangulu bakarang bungo, a prospective pangulu should have been selected by people and he is approved by lembaga kerapatan adat nagari (Dirajo, 2009:183-188; see also Toeah, 1985:66-67; Piliang and Sungut, 2014:217-222).

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Type of research

This study is a qualitative in which its approach is EMIC that categorizes cultural phenomenon according to local residents or culture owners (Kaplan and Manners, 1999: 256-258)^[13]. The approach is also addressed to investigate a phenomenon of social and human problems. Bogdan and Taylor (Moleong, 2007:3^[14]) argued that qualitative methodology produces descriptive data in the form of words, either written or spoken, of people and observed behavior.

3.2 Location and time of research

This research was conducted in Jorong Gando village, Nagari Piobang in which this nagari is administratively under Payakumbuh district, Lima Puluh Kota Regency, West Sumatera Province. This research was divided into two phases; phase 1 which was carried out to record Batagak pangulu ceremony was held in February 9-10, 2014 and phase 2 which was done in June 12-16, 2016 was aimed at collecting opinions from informants through interviews.

3.3 Research procedures and data source

The research procedures include 1) to collect inventory of sites that would be determined as research site, 2) to explore the information in the society in relation to Batagak Pangulu ceremony-to-be, 3) to hold video shooting, 5) to arrange interviews with informants, and 6) to reconstruct the revitalisation models. Data source was focusing only on one Batagak Pangulu ceremony which was held at Jorong Gando village. In this research, researchers created a complex picture to study words and respondents' views, and also conducted a study on the natural situation (Creswell, 1998: 15).^[15] Thus, the data is in a form of words and/or a string of words (Denzin and Lincoln, 2009;^[16] see Miles and Huberman, 2007: 15-16^[17]). The interpretation towards the ceremony was done by the researchers (Spradley, 2007)^[18] in order the richness of local communities' knowledge can be opened as wide as possible. The data source was obtained from the traditional speech delivered by the pangulu who was inaugurated.

3.4 Data collection

The data collection is carried out by three methods: First, in-depth and open interviews which were used as purposive sampling to select informants who knew a lot about the powers of the customs about how to control the Nagari Piobang. The number of informants is determined by the situation and by their adequacy and accuracy towards the data. Second, focus group discussions were used with a purpose to obtain information on local wisdoms of the ceremony and related the wisdoms with some sociocultural aspects. Such focus groups were held several times. will be conducted several times. Each group consisted of 4-7 people. This method was useful to explore the local wisdoms. The third method was documentation.

3.5 Research instruments

Some instruments, for example, the notebooks, tape-recorder, camera, camcorder as well as the researchers themselves are used. Since the population in this research was homogenous, so the research sample is carried out in non-purposive involving all parties of different villages.

3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis techniques were based on Miles and Huberman (1984)^[19] who argued four procedures: (a) data collection, (b) data reduction, (c) the presentation of the data, and (d) conclusion as well as verification. Data analysis was using method of reconstruction which was taken from complementary information and from combination of interviews, observation, and focus group discussions. In addition, data analysis was also assisted by antropolinguistics as a model (Sibarani, 2012: 304-305) starting from verbal and nonverbal elements. Both the structure and formula of verbal and nonverbal elements of this ceremony were explained with the involvement of textual, co-textual and contextual values.

3.7 Reliability and data validity

There were four reliability procedures as proposed by Gibbs (2007)^[20] which were also found in Creswell (2009:190).^[21] Meanwhile, the validity strategies were taken from Creswell (ibid:191-192).

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the theory of "onion layers" the following are the findings that can be discussed and the discussion focuses on several aspects of local wisdom which are found during deep interviews with local experts of Minangkabau culture.

4.1 Mutual cooperation

Local wisdom in the form of mutual cooperation is seen when people carry out the title inauguration which spends high cost of around 100 million rupiahs or more depending on the size of the ceremony. This big money does not become the responsibility of the pangulu himself but of people themselves. Assistance might come from various levels of people in the various shapes, for example, wealth in cash, giving rice and coconuts, preparing firewood, taking water, and in cooking process.

4.2 Deliberation and consensus

Deliberation and consensus can be seen when people decided one person who would substitute old pangulu. Based on agreement which was taken from deliberation and consensus, people would then choose a successor who should be a gentleman. An inauguration would fail if there were no agreement among people; as a result, the title would be folded temporarily. Deliberation could also be seen when the title was inaugurated. Everything which might be decided and implemented should become a product of deliberation. A mediator had to be chosen first of all through meeting and everything that would be delivered by him had also to be discussed beforehand.

4.3 Harmony and conflict solution

Pangulu in Minangkabau serves to maintain harmony and look for solutions when conflicts exist among his nephews. When a conflict occurs among them or with other parties, a pangulu tries hard to reduce tension and solve such conflict peacefully. Conflicts may come out due to treasures, fighting, quarreling between a husband and a wife, and so on and should not be handled by police but by a pangulu who is the leader of the conflicting parties. If such conflict seems not to be solved by a pangulu then it is handed over to law enforcement officials. In this case the existence of pangulu is required in the conflict solution. To empower the pangulu's roles among his people and his tribe or intra people and tribes, Isman (2015: 94-96) argued that (a) members of the tribe who report to the police as a formal law enforcement because of some conflicts among them, the police will not directly process the cases and they first invite the pangulu or ninik mamak and submit the case to the pangulu or ninik mamak to solve; (b) pangulu is equipped with indigenous knowledge and given the right that he is a leader; (c) pangulu is hoped to say the truth and to punish justly; (e) there must be good and smooth communication between pangulu and his people or tribal members; and (f) pangulu's welfare should be paid attention.

4.4 Truth and justice

Pangulu in Minangkabau always speak the truth and punishes fairly. Truth (or *siddiq* in Arabic) is one of Prophet Muhammad's characteristics and this characteristic should be possessed by a pangulu or *datuk* in Minangkabau. He should not be a liar. If a pangulu does not say the truth, some parties will ruin, for instance, his sons, nephews and prosperity will stay away from them because the truth and justice are not be enforced. Therefore, a pangulu should fight for the truth. When a conflict occurs among his nephews so a pangulu can impose fair sentence by becoming a fair judge in the dispute. When he acted unjustly, his prestige would fall down among his nephews and such condition is described as the proverb *balah batuang* (to split a bamboo). To split a bamboo, a person should press one part and pull out the other part.

4.5 Politeness

Politeness can be seen from the opening remarks when somebody is inaugurated as a pangulu. He should begin his remarks with *as-salam* in Islamic religion and this attitude is in relevance with *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah* (the pillar of adat is Law, the pillar of Law is Holly Qur'an). He should then say forgiveness to God whenever he might make mistakes in uttering his speech. The speaker of the customary speech is aware that he is a weak creature before God and has a little knowledge compared to the knowledge God possesses. Then he also talks about apology to *ninik mamak*, clerics, scholars, and *bundo Kandung* in the delivery of his speech whenever he speaks not in accordance with what has been laid down by the customs. This shows that as human being he could not be free from making errors and oversights. Values that can be drawn from this behavior are politeness, humility, and no pride which can be portrayed as the proverb *ilmu padi semakin lama semakin merunduk* (the knowledge of paddy shows that the more older the paddy is, the more bowing it is). This proverb means that when somebody has more knowledge, he is hoped not to be arrogant. This value needs to be passed on to the next generation to maintain virtuous life and dignity. Likewise, when ending his customary speech, the speaker closes it with *wassalam* (closing).

4.6 Commitments

There are strong commitment and synergy between adat and religion. In the Bukit Marapalam charter, the traditional leaders and clerics agreed to end debates and disputes between the indigenous and Padri parties by the establishment of the principle of *adaik basandi syarak, syarak basandi Kitabullah* in Minangkabau and

this agreement are still adopted until post war. Amir (2013) stated that although the text of the charter is difficult to show, such cultural identity is plugged into the hearts of the Minangkabau people. Clerics and tribal leaders or pangulu always guard its presence in the community. Book of Allah (the Holy Quran) becomes Minangkabau philosophy of life that can not be translated into other meanings. Moreover, the Gebu Minang (BP PAAM - LPAAM, 2012: 564) also pronounced the same philosophy and argued that such philosophy was spoken by Tuanku Imam Bonjol who became a leading cleric on that time. This institution stressed that adat must not be in conflict with religion and adat is in relevance with religion.^[22]

4.7 Harmony

Harmony between adat and religion can be identified from good relationships between these two institutions. Adat in Minangkabau is religiously Islamic and downloaded from the Holy Quran, the Prophet's *assunah*, the *ijtima'* (consensus), and *kiyas* (Marajo, 2006: 9-11).^[23] Islamic laws and norms are taken from these four sources. Because they are universal, Islamic laws and norms are accepted by Minangkabau society and adapted in line with time changes. The philosophy of *adat bersendi syarak, syarak bersendi Kitabullah* is in application in the indigenous adat structure which consists of pangulu (from adat institution), religious clerics and *malin* (from religious institution) plus the availability of mosques and halls which become the *nagari'* infrastructures. Customary halls (or *balairung*) are used as meeting places by *nagari* structures, such as pangulu (*ninik mamak*), imam preachers, and scholars who are considered as *tungku tigo sajarangan* (stove with three burners). Mosque and *mushalla* become the places of worship and religious education for village children.

4.8 Gender management

Women in Minangkabau have high and noble position and are called *bundo Kanduang* which literally means 'biological mother'. This term then evolves into a call of honor in the Minangkabau leadership and becomes the symbol of wise mothers in the indigenous life and in the *rumah gadang*. As wise mothers they are then called *limpapeh rumah nan gadang*, *amban puro pagangan kunci*, *amban puruak aluang bunian*, *pusek jalo kumpulan tali*, *hiasan di dalam kampung*, and *sumarak di dalam nagari*. All these names refer to the concept of 'decoration in the *gadang house*' which is meant to make house radiant. Women become the key holders and the agricultural crops ... (Marajo, 2006:55-56).

Thaib (2013) argued that the concept of gender in Minangkabau society has put a balance position between women and men.^[24] They are all equally important but only distinguished in their functions. In the Minangkabau culture, the highest decision is held by women or *bundo Kanduang* who can be assumed as company owner but the company director is a man. *Bundo Kanduang* is also named the successor descendants, the heirs to the treasures, the guards of the society welfare, and the main holders of sovereignty. Therefore, there are several roles of *bundo Kanduang*, ranging from motivating and protecting people, and distributing aids to unaffordable families. All people's problems and their solutions depend on *bundo Kanduang*; therefore, with all these functions and responsibilities, women should be mentally strong.

Either males or females, human beings in the face of Allah have naturally the same degree but are distinguished by their levels of piety. Islamic law has put women to the noble place as stated in the Holy Qur'an: O mankind! We created you from a male and a female and made you nations and tribes that ye may know each other. Indeed the noblest of you with Allah is the most pious among you (Q. Al Hujurat 49:13)^[25] This verse shows that Allah has mentioned the benchmark that can distinguish human beings, either males or females, is their piety.

4.9 Social solidarity

During Batagak Pangulu ceremony, various helps from clan or tribal members do come and are based on people's capabilities, for example, financial assistance, thoughts, rice, coconuts, and physical power. Minang people have the concept of "no man is useless", meaning all human beings are useful in accordance with their abilities. This condition is described in the following proverbs: *nan cadiaak bao baiyo* (the smart person is brought into discussion), *nan buto pahambuih lasuang* (the blind blows mortar), *nan pakak pamasang badia* (the deaf installs guns), *nan lumpuah paunyi rumah* (the lame guards house), *nan patah pangajuik ayam* (the disable chases chickens away), and *nan kayo bakeh batenggang* (the rich becomes considerant). Another form of solidarity can be seen from lunch together after they finish cooking buffalo meat. All people without exception are invited during such lunch so this becomes big moment.

V. CONCLUSION

Pangulu in Minangkabau is a village leader who is responsible for and obliged to protect this tribal members, his tribe, and village as well as the treasures belonged to his people. Pangulu is also responsible for seeking answers to the problems available in his community. The dead or elderly pangulu can no longer perform his duties in giving care to his people so a new pangulu is chosen. To inform village community that there will

be new pangulu, a Batagak Pangulu ceremony is held. Batagak Pangulu in Minangkabau tradition needs to be maintained because such tradition contains local knowledge which can bring peace and prosperity among members of pangulu society. Forms of local wisdom might include mutual cooperation, deliberation and consensus, harmony and conflict solution, truth and justice, politeness, commitments, management of gender, and social solidarity.

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