

**THE ORIGIN OF LAKE MANINJAU**  
*Asal-usul Danau Maninjau*

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## THE ORIGIN OF LAKE MANINJAU

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Language Development and Cultivation Agency  
Ministry of Education and Culture, Republic of Indonesia  
Jalan Daksinapati Barat IV, Ramangun, Jakarta  
Telepon (021) 4706287, 4706288, 4896558, 4894546  
Pos-el: badan.bahasa@kemdikbud.go.id  
[www.badanbahasa.kemdikbud.go.id](http://www.badanbahasa.kemdikbud.go.id)

## **THE ORIGIN OF LAKE MANINJAU**

### **Mount Tinjau**

Mount Tinjau was said to be the biggest mount in West Sumatra. This mount, which was located in Agam Regency, was close to two other mounts, Mount Merapi and Mount Singgalang.

The peak of Mount Tinjau did not appear pointy like many other volcanoes. Mount Tinjau looked sturdy and huge. At its peak, a mega-wide crater was found. Plants barely grew around the crater, except for the shrubs sheltered by rocks. Even so, it could be said that these plants were half-dead, half-alive.

At the foot of the Mount Tinjau, there were several villages. The fertile soil at the foot of that mount had attracted many people to live there. They commonly worked in the farm. They grew all types of plants. The plants, starting from rice to fruits (such as durian, oranges, and guavas) and vegetables (such as potatoes, cabbages, chilies, tomatoes, and beans) grew well there. And that was the reason why the villagers at the foot of Mount Tinjau lived prosperously and wealthily. They were very agile and farmed diligently. The harvests that they earned always came in abundant quantity.

A clan lived in one of those villages, Datuk Limbatang's clan. As the name suggested, the clan was led by Datuk Limbatang.

The clan of Datuk Limbatang comprised several families. One of those families was consisted of ten siblings: nine men and one woman. These nine men (their names were Kukuban, Kudun, Bayua, Malintang, Galapuang, Balok, Batang, Bayang, and Kaciak) were called Nine Bachelors by the local people. Meanwhile, their sister Siti Rasani, was usually called Sani.

That night, they sat around their mother who was lying ill in bed.

“Before my death comes, I ask all of you to make a promise. You must live in harmony. Kukuban, my son, as the eldest son, I ask you to take care of your brothers and sister”.

“Yes, mother. I promise to take care of my brothers and sister,” Kukuban replied while kissing his mother's hand.

“Do not ever neglect Sani, the youngest one and your only sister,” the mother said afterwards.

“Yes, Mother,” The Nine Bachelors replied synchronously. “We will love Siti Rasani wholeheartedly,” continued Kudun.

A joyful smile came on the old woman's lips. She stared at her ten children, one by one.

“No need to worry, Sister. I shall keep an eye on and educate the children so that they can bring happiness to us all.” Datuk Limbatang tried to convince his sister.

All of a sudden, a tense atmosphere came, just like the two previous years; when their father took his last breath, also in that room. From then on, the ten siblings neither had father nor mother. They became orphans, and then they lived in the house inherited from their parents. By tradition, their house was dubbed *bagonjong* house because the shape of the roof was sharp and looming like buffalo’s horns.

There are various types of *bagonjong* house. Normally, the type of *bagonjong* house is determined by the number of its *lanjar*. *Bagonjong* house with two *lanjars* are called *lipek pandan* (pandanus folding). In general, *lipek pandan* uses two *gonjongs*, like those of the Nine Bachelor’s house. The house with three *lanjars* is called *balah bubuang* (*belah bubung*). The roof has four pointy tips. The house with four *lanjars* is called *gajah maharam* (drowned elephant). Normally, *gajah maharam* has six or more pointy tips.

Judging from the number of its *lanjar* and *gonjong*, the house of the Nine Bachelors and Siti Rasani fell into the type of *lipek pandan* (pandanus folding). There were two *lanjars* (segments from the front to back) and *gonjongs*. As the house was well-maintained, that stilt-spined-roof-house appeared to remain sturdy

and clean. Its beauty replenished the natural beauty of the foot of Mount Tinjau.

The extremely important part of the house was the pit. The Nine Bachelors and Siti Rasani's house pit was considerably high and wide. Besides functioning as a warehouse for agricultural tools, the house pit also became a place for Siti Rasani's weaving activities. The house of Nine Bachelors and Siti Rasani was supported by a foundation pillar placed on a stone niche. Such construction allowed the house pole to shift and wobble. In fact, the structure was not built using plain joints or any nails, making the spired-roof-house earthquake-resistant.

In the wake of the death of both of their parents, Kukuban was the one trusted to be the head of the family. As the firstborn, Kukuban must be responsible for the survival of his siblings. Every day, he took his eight younger brothers to the field and farmland. While at the same time, he asked Siti Rasani to stay in the house for cooking and doing house chores. Simply put, Kukuban was the decision maker of the family.

### **Nine Bachelors and Siti Rasani**

It was still dark. The sky still left a glimpse of the moon. Its reddish glow was yet to glow entirely. The dew was still firmly swaying at the tip of the leaves. The dawn at the slope of Mount Tampak was a huge indulgence for most of the villagers. They

were still asleep. The chickens were the only ones busy scratching the ground, looking for food. From afar, the sound of the birds was heard twittering to each other, as if they wanted to greet the sun.

Unlike other houses, hustle and bustle had begun in the big house (*rumah gadang*) which was located in the middle of that village. Its residents, Nine Bachelors and Siti Rasani, had started their daily routines.

In that five-spired roof house with red-green croton fences, Siti Rasani, as usual, had woken up even before the crack of dawn.

She was busy preparing breakfast for the Nine Bachelors who were about to go to the fields. Siti Rasani cooked rice, side dishes, and vegetables for the Nine Bachelors. She also prepared their drinks. Not all of her brothers liked to drink coffee in the morning. Kudun, Bayua, and Kaciak preferred hot tea.

“The tea that you brew is incredible, Sani,” Kudun praised her as he sipped that warm tea.

“It tastes exactly the same with the tea brewed by mother,” Bayua added.

“Ahh, my brothers Kudun and Bayua, please, it’s just regular tea,” said Siti Rasani as she blushed.

“This *rendang* (hot and spicy beef curry) that you cooked is also very delicious, Sani. Not to mention this yam shoots curry.” Bayang did not want to be outdone in praising his beloved sister.

“Apparently you inherited Mother’s cooking skill,” said Galapuang abruptly. He sat against the chair in the corner of the room. He was really on a full stomach. His brothers laughed at him.

“*See*, don’t be greedy, Galapuang. Eat just enough,” Kukuban gave advice to his brother. “Let’s go. It will be dawn soon.”

The morning air was cool. The sun started to peer out little by little at the eastern horizon. The yellowish light started out to radiate on the slopes of Mount Tinjau, shining on the fields and farmlands there. Then, the Nine Bachelors went to their respective field or farmland. They had already divided their tasks. Some of them worked on rice field, whilst others work on farmland. But, they were always together, be it in joy and sorrow. Their harmony sometimes made many people jealous of them.

To meet daily living needs, the Nine Bachelors farmed. They worked on the farmlands inherited from both of their parents. The products of the paddy field and the farmland inherited from their parents were enough to meet the living necessities for the ten of them.



Prior to their parents' departure, the Nine Bachelors had gotten used to farming. Every day, they helped their father to farm and cultivate. Besides, they received guidance from their uncle, Datuk Limbatang. On the fields, they had skills to cultivate the soil. Plowing and hoeing were parts of their daily lives, and so was on the field. They skillfully notched sap, climbed the trees, and cultivated vegetables.

The Nine Bachelors thereby were known as tough farmers. Their fields and farmlands always produced abundant harvests. It was because of their agility. In addition to their diligent work and devout worship, they were also always obedient to the rules.

At the meantime, Siti Rasani was working around the house. She washed her brothers' dirty dishes, and then she cleaned up the house. After all the things had been neatly arranged, Siti Rasani went down to the yard. She organized the plants there. Besides flowers, Siti Rasani also grew plants on that fairly large house yard, for example chilies, eggplants, tomatoes, and cassavas. She could use the products to fulfill daily food needs. Since childhood, Siti Rasani had been taught with many kinds of knowledge. Beautiful manner, polite custom, good temperament, and diversified education were fostered within Siti Rasani. She, therefore, grew into a girl with virtuous and charming personality. She grew up into *sumarak* (a glory) in that village that was located at the foot of Mount Tinjau.

“The humanity is bound by a rope of virtue,” so Datuk Limbatang gave his advice at a time.

“Sani is the only becket expected to connect our descendants from here on. In the future, she is *litak ka bakeh mintak nasi, hauih ka tampek mintak aia*. She will be the heir of the big house in the future. We, thereby, must seriously groom this future *bundo kanduang*,” Kukuban added.

“That’s right. We shall also give affection to her. Do remember, when mother passed away, Sani was just a little girl. She did not even have time to feel the affection of our father. By that, we must educate her with gentle attitude,” Bayua reminded his other brothers.

Little Siti Rasani grew into a beautiful teenager. She was extremely beautiful, as beautiful as her courtliness. She turned out to be a gentle, polite, and compassionate girl. “Respecting older people, cherishing the younger ones, and being polite to her peers” had been her way of life, so no wonder many people were attracted to her.

Just like a flower, Siti Rasani was adored by many people. Many bees were attracted to it, and there were many marriage proposals sent to her.

## **Datuk Limbatang**

Datuk Limbatang (usually called *Engku*) was the leader of a clan at the foot of Mount Tinjau. People said the live of the clan under *Engku's* leadership was harmonious and peaceful. As a Datuk and headman in his village, *Engku* was well-aware of his duties. He also had responsibility to his siblings and nephews & nieces in fostering, nurturing, protecting and managing the utilization of inheritance rights and customary rights for the welfare of his clanspersons.

*Datuk* (nobleman) is the traditional honorary title that he received on the bestowal of his clanspersons. The title was conferred in a traditional ceremony. In Minangkabau tradition, there is an expression: *Datuak gelarnya, panghulu jabatannya, dan ninik mamak lembaganya*. On that basis, a Datuk must maintain his dignity. He has to realize that the title he holds is the infinity of traditional honor within a clan. For that reason, besides avoiding countless taboos and restrictions, a Datuk must also acquire positive traits that can be emulated by his clanspersons.

Datuk Limbatang was an uncle, as he was the biological brother of the mother of the Nine Bachelors and Siti Rasani. He must take responsibility for his ten nephews and niece. In the same way, Datuk Limbatang was also the head of the family. He must remain in charge of his wife and child. *Anak dipangku jo pancarian, kamanakan dibimbiang jo pusako*. He had to be

responsible for his children and wife, in addition to his ten nephews and niece. As an uncle, Datuk Limbatang had a great responsibility to educate and care for the lives of the villagers and his ten nephews and niece.

Every other day, Datuk Limbatang with his only child, Giran, sometimes visited the house of Kukuban Brothers to teach them farming methods and many customary practices in the area. Not uncommonly, Datuk Limbatang paid a visit with his only child, Giran. He had to nurture his child, his ten nephews and niece in equal affection.

By tradition, the men in Minangkabau play the role as the leaders in his extended family (his mother's family). The men have responsibility to take care of and protect all of his sisters and children of his sisters.

And so was Datuk Limbatang. As an uncle, he was also obliged to take care and preserve the heritage which became the life source of all members of the extended family. That's why an uncle earned more submission than the father.

The uncle's main duty to his niece is to find her a good spouse. An uncle will be tremendously embarrassed if his coming-of-age niece is yet to get married. He will be labeled as the uncle incapable of looking after his niece. Meanwhile, his niece and her family will be dubbed 'being left on the shelf.'

The marriage of the niece will not reduce the responsibility of the uncle. He will maintain his responsibility to care for the married niece. Even if necessary, he must fulfill her material needs.

And so was the duty of Datuk Limbatang. As an uncle, he must commit himself to his ten nephews and niece. As the headman, he must also be responsible for his clanspersons.

*Urang nan gadang basa batuah*, so said the proverb. *Engku* Limbatang was the supreme leader of his clanspersons. He was a man of greatness or meritoriousness to his clanspersons. He became a role model in his tribe, and was well-respected and honored in his village.

The villagers at the foot of Mount Tinjau generally paid great respect to Datuk Limbatang. As a leader, he behaved immaculately and politely. He always paid attention to every problem endured by his clanspersons.

### **Agility Contest**

The harvest season came. The villagers were having fun. As always, and as a form of gratitude, they threw a celebratory festival. The customary leaders and every villager agreed to hold multiple attractions and competitions. One of the attractions that they always held was martial arts competitions.

Just like the previous years, the village youths enthusiastically welcomed the attraction. With smoldering eagerness, they immediately registered themselves to the organizing committee. Kukuban and Giran were no exception; they also participated in that attraction.

All of the villagers were gathering on a field. The crowd's cheering was jarring throughout the field. The sound of gongs, the marker of the beginning and end of the competition, had been repeatedly heard. It appeared that Kukuban got his first turn to perform against a participant from the neighboring hamlet. They faced each other in the center of the arena. Whoever won the battle, they would fight the next participant. Kukuban defeated his opponents, but nobody could defeat him. There was only one opponent left, Giran.

“Hey, Giran! Enter the arena. Fight me if you dare!” challenged Kukuban.

“All right, Brother! Get ready for my attacks!” Giran responded and promptly attacked Kukuban.

At first, Giran insistently delivered his jabs to Kukuban. Nonetheless, moments later, the table turned; it was Kukuban who relentlessly attacked him. He kept attacking Giran with his stronghold moves, also relentlessly. Giran was cornered and

could not avoid it any longer. As Kukuban casted a hard kick on his left foot, Giran dodged it with his both hands.

“Ouch! It hurts, it hurts! My leg,” cried Kukuban suddenly. He then fell limp on the ground.

Apparently, Giran’s fend-off had broken Kukuban's left leg. He was not capable of continuing the game and was declared defeated.

Despite the victory, Giran did not seem happy. He was sad. He felt guilty over causing injuries to Kukuban.

“Please, forgive me, Brother. I just tried to fend off your jabs,” he pleaded to Kukuban.

“Really, I never meant to do any harm to you, Brother,” Giran continued. He kept trying to give explanation.

*‘Streak of bad luck and string of bad luck’*: that was the description of Kukuban's fate. His conceit had brought him into disgrace. Instead gaining the victory, he suffered from defeat. Giran’s fend-off had broken his left leg.

In the wake of the incident, Kukuban hated Giran. His exasperation and resentment continued. He thought Giran had embarrassed him in public.

“Watch out, Giran. Wait for my revenge later,” he told himself.

Kukuban should not have had the desire to pay such revenge. As the firstborn, he should have set a good example to his younger siblings. Not to mention, the grudge was aimed at Giran, his Uncle's son.

### **Proposing to Siti Rasani**

It was one sunny morning. That five-spired-roof big house seemed to stand gallantly in the morning sunlight. The sky-high peaks of Mount Merapi, Mount Singgalang, and Mount Tinjau were clearly visible. No white clouds blocked the view to them. The forest appeared persistently dense and green, and the cool wind blowing from the mountains. From the distance, three silhouettes were seen getting nearer.

They were apparently Datuk Limbatang, his wife and Giran. Out of ordinary, he gave a very serious impression. He wore full traditional clothing, and so did his wife and son, Giran. They paid a visit to the Nine Bachelors' house for a purpose.

*“Assalamualaikum.”*

*“Alaikum salam,”* Siti Rasani replied as she opened the door. *“Oh, Engku, please come in.”*

*“How are you? I see that you are very cheerful now”*

*“I'm fine, Engku,”* Siti Rasani replied while shaking hands with them, one by one. By chance, Siti Rasani and Giran exchanged



glances. It turned out the two had a crush on each other. Two months previously, Giran invited Siti Rasani to meet on a field beside a river bank. There was a hut in Giran's field that stood right on the river bank. They met in that hut and chatted there. Giran, with a pounding heart, revealed his feeling towards Siti Rasani.

*It's been a long time after the basilis are soaked*

*But it's just about now they begin to grow bigger*

*It's been a long time since my love is kept hidden*

*But it's just about now we meet each other*

*It's been a long time since people became reckless*

*In making big lace dresses*

*It's been a long time since I was besotted*

*Before this meeting, this heart pounded*

*Beautiful face, beautiful demeanor*

*Her life is one good deed*

*People praise her, over and over*

*Anyone who sees her will be mesmerized*

These were three verses of poem serenaded by Giran in front of Sani.

“Sani, you have a beautiful face, good demeanor, and compassionate. Will you be my lover?” asked Giran later.

That question made Siti Rasani’s heart beat fast. In her heart, she liked Giran, too. She then responded to it using a poem as well.

*Jackfruit that’s still young*

*Will be a tasty cooking*

*It’s been long since I’ve been waiting*

*But it’s just now I can send you my greeting*

*If Melaka City shall ever fall*

*I would pull the boards in Java to their vertical*

*If you meant those words for real*

*I would give you this body and soul*

How delighted Giran after hearing Siti Rasani’s response. He was truly happy because of his requited love.

From then on, Giran and Siti Rasani were involved in romantic relationship. At the beginning, the two intended to hide their relationship, but for fear of causing libel, both of them then came

clean about their relationship to their families. After finding out about it, both Giran's and Siti Rasani's families were delighted and happy as it could strengthen their familial relationship.

After having relationship with Siti Rasani, Giran frequently visited the Nine Bachelors' house. In fact, he often helped the Nine Bachelors to work on their fields.

Nevertheless, for some reason, Kukuban seemed to dislike Giran lately. In fact, Kukuban once ranted against Giran,

“You should not have helped us here.”

“Why is that, brother?” Giran asked in bewilderment.

“Ah, never mind,” answered Kukuban, and then he went away. And that's what had been happening all along.

This morning, Datuk Limbatang and his wife visited Nine Bachelors house. They wanted to convey the Giran's marriage proposal to Sani.

“Excuse us, Nine Bachelors, the intention of our visit here is to strengthen our familial relationship,” said Datuk Limbatang.

“What do you mean, *Engku*?” asked Kudun in confusion.

“That’s right, *Engku!* Isn’t our familial relationship good for all this time?” replied Kaciak. Just like Kudun, Kaciak was also amazed and confused.

Seeing his two nephews were dumbfounded, Datuk Limbatang instantly gave an explanation.

“It’s correct, sons. Our relationship has always been good. However, to make it even better, we intend to marry Giran with your youngest sibling, Siti Rasani,” Datuk Limbatang explained.

Shortly thereafter, he continued, “Maybe, there are many people in our village who have asked Siti Rasani to be their daughter-in-law, but Giran and Siti Rasani are a match made in heaven; it’s like going back to their roots; like a duck takes to water; and as you see, it is bound to happen as they will finally meet their fate.

The Nine Bachelors looked at one another. They could not even say a word as they were lost in their own mind.

“Err, look, *Engku,*” said Malintang suddenly.

“Basically, we also feel the same way as you do, *Engku.* We will be glad if Giran gets married to our sister. Giran is a good and hard-working young man,” said Kudun.

“That’s right, *Engku.* All the pursuit made by Giran’s won’t be in vain. Siti Rasani is not a stranger. The entire clan and family will also be lucky,” Bayang interrupted.

“No!”

All of a sudden, Kukuban’s voice was heard, loudly snapped. The teeth of Nine Bachelors’ firstborn were creaking. His face was burning, his hands were repeatedly clenched.

But, shortly after those words came out of Kudun’s lips, Kukuban suddenly screamed very loudly.

“No! I disagree!” Kukuban suddenly screamed all at once. “Giran is a conceited, impolite, and insolent young man. He does not deserve to be Sani’s husband,” he continued.

“Is what you said true, son? Is there any Giran’s word or action that might have offended you?” Datuk Limbatang asked calmly.

“Yes, there is, *Engku!* Do you still remember about the incident happening a few years ago? Giran broke my left leg. It still leaves a scar here,” replied Kukuban curtly, as he rolled up his trousers for the scar of his broken leg to see.

“Oh, that?” Datuk Limbatang responded with a smile. “Isn’t the matter about sprained or broken legs, and the problem of losing or winning in a match, a common occurrence?” Datuk Limbatang asked back.

“But *Engku!* Giran has humiliated me in public,” told Kukuban.

“I don’t think Giran had the intention to humiliate you, son,” Datuk Limbatang tried to explain.

“Ah, that’s what you say, because you wish to come to the defense of your son! Where is your fairness as the customary leader?” Kukuban argued as he tossed his hands to the floor.

Everybody in the meeting was silent. Kukuban’s other eight siblings did not dare to speak. The atmosphere became quiet and intense. Datuk Limbatang was the only one who remained calm.

“I’m sorry, son! I didn’t wish to defend anyone. I’m just telling the truth. Justice shall be based on the truth,” told Datuk Limbatang.

“What other kinds of truth that you meant? Wasn’t it Giran who clearly had brought me into disgrace in public?”

“You should know it, son! According to witnesses of the incident, it was you who actually attacked Giran. Due to your hard kick, Giran was cornered and eventually fended off using both of his hands, and that fend-off eventually broke your leg. Do you think defending oneself from attack is fraudulent and wrong?” asked Datuk Limbatang after giving an explanation.

“Whatever, *Engku*, if you want to defend your own son. But, Sani is our sister. I will never marry Sani with your son, *Engku*,” told Kukuban harshly.

“Alright, son! Giran is indeed my son, but I do not want to blindly defend him. In my opinion, Giran did nothing wrong, Kukuban. He just fended off your kick. After all, Giran had apologized to you.” Datuk Limbatang tried to explain it to Kukuban.

“No way! Just no. I will never give my permission to allow Siti Rasani to get married with Giran.”

“Fine, son! Nor will I force you to. But, we hope that one day, this decision can be changed,” said Datuk Limbatang, as he and his wife said goodbye to them

### **The Meeting that Spells Disasters**

Despite his disappointment, Datuk Limbatang still respected the decision of the Nine Bachelors. No matter what, Siti Rasani was their youngest sister, but Kukuban’s refusal of Giran’s marriage proposal was still open for deliberation.

The deliberation was held twice. The first one was attended by Datuk Limbatang. As an uncle, he should be fair in giving guidance to his son, nephews, niece, and family. Nevertheless, he still needed to respect the decision of his nephews, by not imposing his will on them. For the second deliberation, Datuk Limbatang was not in attendance. He entirely handed the matter over to the nine elder brothers of Siti Rasani. Datuk Limbatang would accept the decision made in the deliberation.

Whatever the decision was, Datuk Limbatang would accept it. He did such thing because Giran was his biological child.

Siti Rasani heard the entire discussion between her brothers and Datuk Limbatang. She was deeply disappointed at the decision of his eldest brother. Eight of the Nine Bachelors agreed to take Giran as Siti Rasani's husband, but Kukuban apparently had dug his heels in. He was against the idea that Giran should become Siti Rasani's spouse. The reason was considerably convincing, Giran had inflicted injury to Kukuban.

A fight almost broke out between them. But, their mother once told the Nine Bachelors to always remain in harmony and peace, and take care of Siti Rasani. The decision was then taken. Their mother's message served as a touchstone for the decision. As there was one person who took a stance against it, then everyone made an agreement not to accept Giran as Siti Rasani's husband.

From then on, her brothers closely watched over Siti Rasani. She was not allowed to see Giran ever again.

Of course, it saddened Siti Rasani, her heart was wounded, and she felt tormented. Siti Rasani was no longer excused to come to Datuk Limbatang's house, even though she was raised in that house.

Following that incident, Siti Rasani appeared to look gloomy all the time. She spent her days on reverie, and so did Giran. They



were trying to find a way out. Siti Rasani and Giran finally agreed to discuss the problem they endured on a field by the river where they previously met.

“What should we do now?” Giran asked.

“I have no idea. I do not know what to do as well. All decisions in my family are in the hands of my brother Kukuban, but he terrible despises and holds grudges against you,” said replied Siti Rasani with a sigh.

Some time had passed since they began engaging in discussion, yet no way out was found. With chaotic state of mind, Siti Rasani stood up from the place she sat on. All of a sudden, a piece of thorny twig got stuck in her sarong.

“Ouch, my sarong is ripped!” Siti Rasani shouted in shock.

“Well, it looks like your foot is scratched by thorns. Sit down, I will treat your wound,” Giran said.

Giran instantly looked for medicinal leaves in the vicinity to dispense them and cleaned the blood coming out of Siti Rasani’s foot and treated her wound. What followed was ‘streak of bad luck and string of bad luck’. At that moment, dozens of people came out from behind the trees and immediately besieged them. They were the Nine Bachelors and several villagers.

“Hey, here you are!” Kukuban shouted.

Giran and Siti Rasani were clueless about what to do. Both of them were completely unaware that there were dozens of people secretly watching over them.

“Get them! We shall bring them before the customary assembly!” Kukuban instructed.

“Have some mercy, please! We did not do anything. I was only treating Sani’s thorn-inflicted wound” Giran pleaded.

“You are lying! I saw it myself that you were rubbing my sister’s legs! Kukuban snarled.

“That’s right! You two have committed illicit deeds. Both of you shall be brought before the customary assembly for trial,” continued one villager.

Every problem about children, nephews & nieces that was related to the village lives would be discussed by customary leaders. Typically, the headman or clan leader together with clerical scholars, pundits, and village’s government officials would conduct deliberation in customary hall.

In the village’s customary meeting, the customary hall is called *balerong*. In that *balerong*, all the problems are discussed to enforce the rules.

*Balerong di tanah Minang: tampek duduak nak samorandah, tampek tagak nak samo tinggi, tampek duduakbajalan baiyo,*

*tampek tagak bakato bamulo, tampekmancari bana nan saukua, nak tibo kato di mufakat, tampek mahukum nak samo adia, tampek mambagi naksamo banyak.*

The outcome of deliberation and consensus is used as a guideline in organizing the community lives. All of which is certainly referring to the basis of *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi kitabullah*.

Ultimately, Giran and Siti Rasani were led to the village to appear before the customary assembly. Kukuban and several villagers testified that they saw the illicit deed committed by Giran and Siti Rasani with their very own eyes.

“I saw it for myself. These two were getting all hanky-panky in the hut,” told one of them.

“That’s correct, I also saw that Giran groped Siti Rasani’s legs before my very eyes,” added another person.

“It’s true. It’s true,” other peopleshouted.

Giran and Siti Rasani’s explanation fell on deaf ears. In fact, they even ignored Datuk Limbatang’s defense as they had reached an agreement.

“As you know it, my brothers and sisters, Giran and Siti Rasani are proven to have broken the customary law. They were alone in that hut, and therefore they must have committed indecent acts”

the meeting leader spoke. He was already under the influence of Kukuban.

Besides being an embarrassment, the act committed by Siti Rasani and Giran could place a jinx on the whole village. To avoid the catastrophe from happening to our village, we therefore must throw both of them into the crater of Mount Tinjau,” he carried on.

Despite being backed up by Datuk Limbatang’s defense, the deliberation had arrived to a conclusion that Siti Rasani and Giran were found guilty. Besides being an embarrassment, the act committed by Siti Rasani and Giran could also bring bad luck. To avoid the catastrophe from happening to the village, both of them therefore must be thrown into the crater of Mount Tinjau. The decision was then announced to every village corner around Mount Tinjau.

“Isn’t Giran the son of Datuk Limbatang?” one of the villagers asked.

“Yes, he is, but isn’t Siti Rasani the sister of the Nine Bachelors, why are they being punished so hard?” asked another villager.

That day had finally come. Giran and Sani were paraded towards the peak of Mount Tinjau. Their hands were tied behind their backs; and they were blindfolded with a black cloth.

## **Lake Maninjau**

*Kamanakan barajo ka mamak, mamak barajo ka panghulu, panghulu barajo ka mufakat, mufakat barajo ka nan bana, bana manuruik alua jo patuik.*

The proverb reveals the governmental structure based on custom. Nephews/ nieces and uncles are all included in the customary law of the village. However, the one upheld the supreme power is the truthfulness, done according to the regulatory and propriety.

The decision had been made. The Nine Bachelors and the whole community thought they were the ones with the truth. Although Datuk Limbatang, as the uncle and customary leader of the clan, had tried to straighten out the misunderstanding, the community remained firm on their opinion that Giran and Siti Rasani were guilty.

The sun had set. An eerie atmosphere enfolded the foot of the mount. The villagers lit torches and flocked down the mountainside. Once they arrived at the mouth of the crater, the situation immediately turned into silence and stillness. There was only the sound of the ravens which was heard now and then, accompanied by the roar from inside of the crater.

In a heavy voice, Kukuban said, “Kudun, grab the black cloth, close their eyes!”

Kudun swiftly grabbed the black cloth from Balok's hands. He blindfolded his sister and Giran with that cloth.

The moment went back to silence. The Nine Bachelors were seen whispering to discuss something. At the meantime, Datuk Limbatang stood limply in a crowd of his clans. He was helpless.

"Sani, Giran, you two are given a chance to say something," Kukuban said rigidly.

"Open my blindfold. I should not be blindfolded. We are not guilty." Siti Rasani expressed her wish loudly.

"Oh, my brothers and sisters; know it! We truthfully did not commit any illicit deed," told Giran. He raised both of his hands to heaven as he prayed, "Dear God! Please hear and grant our prayers. If we truly are guilty, destroy our bodies in the crater of this mount; instead if we are not, blow this mountain and curse the Nine Bachelors into fish!"

Giran's plea was granted. Mount Tinjau was shaken abruptly, followed by eruption. The explosion was so huge that the body of the mount was shot into the sky, and then crashed back to the earth, forming a range of hills in Luak Agam. Hot lava spurted from the inside of the crater and destroyed everything.

Nobody survived. The foot of Mount Tinjau then turned into hills, forming a circle. As time went by, the hill circle was filled with water and became a lake, Lake Maninjau.

By God Almighty, the Nine Bachelors were cursed into fish; the name was *rayo* fish. They were five fathoms long, blue-backed, and red-chested. They had a pair of flopped tentacles. The nine *rayo* fish inhabited Lake Maninjau. They were in charge of keeping Lake Maninjau from damage.

In the meantime, the supporters of the Nine Bachelors were cursed into *rinuak* fish. Their shape was small, like anchovies. The word on the street was that *rinuak* fish breed well in Lake Maninjau. To this day, *rinuak* fish becomes the subsistence of Tanjunggraya community and its surroundings.

Lake Maninjau is estimated to have a total area of 284 square km, consisting of land (148.5 square km), waters (99.5 square km), and fire absorption (measured about 2-5 square km).

The shape of Lake Maninjau bears resemblances to a large cauldron filled with water. Sloping hills are found around the lake. Large trees grow prolifically on the slopes. The area becomes a buffer and water catchment area of Lake Maninjau.

In the Dutch colonial era, Lake Maninjau area served as a tourist area. The Dutch Government (based in Bukittinggi) then built a winding road through the steep hills. Rumor has it that the road is

composed of 44 road curves, making the area popular by the name *Kelok Ampekpuluah Ampek*.

Besides being a tourist destination, Lake Maninjau is also made as a pilot project for environmental conservation efforts. The community is strictly forbidden to destroy the forest. In fact, the people in the hills are instructed to plant trees. That is why many clove, coffee, nutmeg, cinnamon, and durian plants grow in the area of Lake Maninjau. In 1982, the northern and southern areas of Maninjau were designated as a nature reserve area, and then in 1991, Lake Maninjau was reassigned as a natural tourist destination. The government conducted the provision related to the declaration of “Visit Indonesia 1991”.

In 1997, when the economic crisis hit Indonesia, the number of Lake Maninjau’s visitors dropped significantly. The declining number of visitors led to poor maintenance of Lake Maninjau. In addition to being turbid, the water Lake Maninjau was also receding. The fish (such as *bada*, *rinuak*, *gariang*, *barau*, *kalian panjang*, *cideh-cideh*, *kailan gadih*, *todak*, *supareh*, *asang*, and *pensi*) died in large quantities. In fact, some of them have gone extinct.

The surrounding community refers to death of the fish in Lake Maninjau as *tubo*. The community believes that death of the fish in Lake Maninjau is caused by the ascending sulfur from the lakebeds. *Tubo* is commonly characterized by the emergence of



*darek* (strong wind), followed by the smell of sulfur. It is not uncommon if heavy rains accompany the arrival of *tubo*.

During *tubo*, the community (young and old, male and female) go to the shore of the lake and have a great fun catching the fish. The fish are easy to catch as they become intoxicated with sulfur. For the community, *tubo* is a gift from God.