

THE MYSTERIOUS JUNGLE
Misteri di Hutan Rimba

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Language Development and Cultivation Agency
Ministry of Education and Culture
Republic of Indonesia
2018

THE MYSTERIOUS JUNGLE

Translated from
Misteri di Hutan Rimba
written by Erli Yetti
published by
Language Development and Cultivation Agency
Ministry of Education and Culture
in 2016

This translation has been published as the result of the translation program organized
by The Center for Language Strategy and Diplomacy Development,
Language Development and Cultivation Agency, Ministry of Education and Culture
in 2018

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Diterbitkan ulang pada tahun 2016 oleh:

Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa

Jalan Daksinapati Barat IV

Rawamangun

Jakarta Timur

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PB	<u>Katalog Dalam Terbitan (KDT)</u>
398.209 598 1	<u>Yetti, Erli</u>
YET	<u>Misteri di Hutan Rimba/Erli Yetti; Kity Karenisa (Penyunting) Jakarta: Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, 2016.</u>
00	<u>51 hlm; 21 cm</u>
	<u>ISBN 978-602-437-018-3</u>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. KESUSASTERAAAN RAKYAT-SUMBAWA2. CERITA RAKYAT-NTB

Foreword

Literature work is not only series of word but it also talks about life, both realistically and idealistically of human. If it is realistic, the literature work usually contains life experiences, good model, and wisdom which have been added various style and imagination along with it. Meanwhile, if it idealistic, the literature work contains moral lecture, good character, advices, philosophical symbols, culture and other things related to human life. The life itself is very diverse, varies, and full of various problems and conflicts faced by humans. The diversity in humans life also affects to the diversity of literature work because the contents are inseparable from civilized and dignified humans life.

The literature works that dealing with life utilizes language as medium of deliverance and imaginative art as its *cultural land*. On the basis of the language medium and imaginative art, literature is multidimensional and multi-interpretative. Using language medium, imaginative art and cultural dimension, literature deliver messages to be reviewed or analyzed from various perspectives. The outcome of that perspective depends greatly on who is reviewing and analyzing with various socio-cultural and knowledge background. There is a time when a literary reviewer reviews from the point of view of metaphor, myth, symbol, power, ideology, economy, politics, and culture can be refuted by other reviewers who see from perspective of sound, referent, or irony. Even so, Heraclitus said, "However opposite they work together and from different directions, the most beautiful harmony emerges".

There are many lessons that we can get from reading literature, one of which is reading folktales that are adapted or reprocessed into children's stories. The results of reading literature always inspire and motivate readers to be creative in

finding something new. Reading literature can trigger further imagination, open enlightenment, and add insights. For this reason, we express our gratitude for the processors for the story. We also express our appreciation and gratitude to the Head of the Coaching Center, Head of the Learning Division, and Head of the Subdivision of Modules and Teaching Materials and staffs for all the efforts and hard works carried out until the realization of this book.

Hopefully this storybook is not only useful as a reading material for students and the community to foster a culture of literacy through the National Literacy Movement program, but also useful as an enrichment of our knowledge of past life that can be utilized in addressing current and future life developments.

Jakarta, June 2016

Regards,
Prof. Dr. Dadang Sunendar, M. Hum.

Preface

Dear beloved rothers and sisters,

Our country has thousands of stories they are fables, myths and so on. *The Mysterious Jungle* was adapted from a folklore of Sumbawa entitled *Human Buffalo* which taken from a collection of folktales entitled *Sumbawa Oral Literary Structure* published by Ministry of education and Culture, in 1986. will *The Mysterious Jungle* be made in six episodes, namely (1) *Fell In Love in The Jungle*, (2) *The lost of Siti Mardinah*, (3) *The Sultan Proposed Siti Mardinah*, (4) *The Marriage of Sultan Salehudin with Siti Mardinah*, (5) *Back to Real Nature*, (6) *Happily Live Ever After*.

This story is adapted in simple language and expected to attract Junior high school students' reading attention. All critics, opinions, suggestions, and input will be happily received by the author for future improvement.

Erli Yetti

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THE MYSTERIOUS JUNGLE

Falling in Love in the Jungle

Once upon a time, in the Kingdom of Bima, there was a Sultanate ruled by a king named Sultan Salehudin.

Sultan Salehudin reigned with wisdom. Therefore, his people loved him very much. He was still young, good-looking, and strong. Nevertheless, the king had not thought of getting himself a queen. If only he had wanted to, it would not have been difficult, since there were many noble princesses and sultans' daughters who were fond of him.

In the palace, the Queen Mother often reminded Sultan Salehudin to take a wife soon and yet the Sultan always answered her delicately that he had not yet found the woman of his dreams.

Sultan Salehudin loved hunting in his leisure time. He usually went hunting accompanied by the royal courtiers for long stretches at a time, therefore at times he needed to spend several nights in the jungle.

One day, Sultan Salehudin and his entourage went hunting in the foot of Londa Mountain. According to the scouts, that place had a lot of fawns with their soft meat.

Londa was surrounded by a very fertile jungle with big and tall trees, which had grown very tall like giant posts. The bushes there were thick and green, the weather was fair. The area of Mount Londa was rarely touched by the hunters' hands.

Sultan Salehudin had been hunting for two nights in that area without managing to catch a single deer. He started to question the report of the scouts which stated that there were a lot of deer wandering in the jungle. Despite of his barren efforts, the Sultan did not give up yet.

On the third day, the Sultan and his entourage moved forward to the deepest part of the jungle and set up their camp in the plain sheltered by big tall trees.

“Let us rest for a night here. Tomorrow morning we will start hunting again. Hopefully we will find those deer we heard live here,” said Sultan Salehudin to the leader of his entourage.

At night, the Sultan and his entourage took their rest, with some of the guards on the alert to watch out their surroundings. Around midnight, they reported of having heard a scream.

“What kind of scream is that?” asked the Sultan, perplexed.

“Oh, it sounded like a woman's scream, Your Majesty,” responded the guards' leader. “At first we thought it was just the

sound of the wind rustling through the leaves. However, having listened to it better, it sounded more like a scream of a woman, Your Majesty.”

Having heard it, the Sultan got curious and ordered his men to investigate further. He was astonished to hear the sound himself later on. The woman’s scream was heard clearly, continuously and now even became a heart-wrenching wail.

“Mother, why don’t you come home? Don’t you take pity on us?” asked the voice.

“Mother, is there something that keeps you from coming home like you used to?”

The words came from a voice behind the big trees, which had a formation like a circular fence. Sultan Salehudin grew more curious but unfortunately it was already late at night and the surrounding area was dark that it was difficult to see beyond those trees.

Around midnight, the strange sound stopped. At the end, the Sultan decided to go back to his camp.

“We’ll investigate it again tomorrow. During the day it will not be as difficult as it is now,” he said.

The Sultan ordered several guards to keep watching out around those trees.

The following morning, the Sultan and Mangkubumi, as well as several of his trusted men, set out to investigate one more time.

In the deepest part of the jungle there were several big and tall trees. They formed a circle like a sturdy fence with gaps between them filled with bushes and thorny plants, as if a fence or fortress had been there to protect what was inside it.

“Mangkubumi, I am sure that there is something inside that circle of trees. I don’t know what, but the voice of last night came exactly from there. Let’s go inside it,” whispered the Sultan.

“You have to be careful, Your Majesty, the bushes between those trees are thorny. Don’t let them hurt you,” responded Mangkubumi.

They carefully made their way through the thicket by moving slowly, carving a way until reaching the inner part. And then, through the slit among the bushes, they saw a big hut where they saw a female buffalo in front of two young women inside it.

Sultan and Mangkubumi stared at each other in confusion. They could hardly believe what their eyes were seeing. The two young women were also very beautiful.

“Mangkubumi, they probably are not human beings. What if they’re fairies?” whispered Sultan Salehudin.

Mangkubumi only responded by shrugging his shoulders, with eyes locked on the two young women.

The two girls, who had just grown into young women, seemed to be around the same age. They looked so much alike it was difficult to distinguish one from the other in a glance. Both were talking to the female buffalo.

It was amazing to see a talking buffalo. The two young women called it “mother”. The Sultan and Mangkubumi listened carefully to eavesdrop what they were talking about.

“I came home late last night because I saw a camp not far from our house. It was probably occupied by hunters. That’s why I had to hide for a while because had they seen me, they would have caught me. Well, I hope you understand now why I came home late,” said the buffalo.

“Why would those hunters catch you, Mother? What have you done wrong?” asked one of the young women with her melodious voice.

“They’re hunting, Daughter. If they see me, of course I will become their target. Well, let’s just forget about it for now. But

do listen to me. Tomorrow I have to go really early in the morning. That's why you have to wake up as early as possible. When I am away, do not make any noise because if you do, those hunters will hear you and will kidnap you."

"Will they, Mother? Aargh, I am so scared now."

"Well, you better start working like you should now. I am exhausted and I would like to rest."

The two young women stood up and led the buffalo to the corner of the hut. One of them took the hay and rolled it out as a mattress for the buffalo. The other one took the fresh grass from a basket and fed it to the buffalo's mouth. While she was feeding the animal, the other one took some water and a facecloth. And then, she began to scrub the buffalo's body affectionately.

Sultan Salehudin was astonished to see such a bizzare scene, while Mangkubumi's eyes were wide open in awe. They could not understand how it was possible that a buffalo could talk and have two beautiful daughters. After spying for quite some time, they returned to the camp. The Sultan no longer remembered about their hunting plans.

"Mangkubumi, who do you think they are?" asked the Sultan after they had reached the camp.

“I think they are sort of fairies or supernatural beings sent into exile. Probably they have committed a mistake and so they were cast away in this jungle. The mother of those two girls was cursed into a buffalo, Your Majesty,” answered Mangkubumi.

“Hmm, that is possible. How lovely they are. Ah, if only it were possible, I would like to marry one of them.”

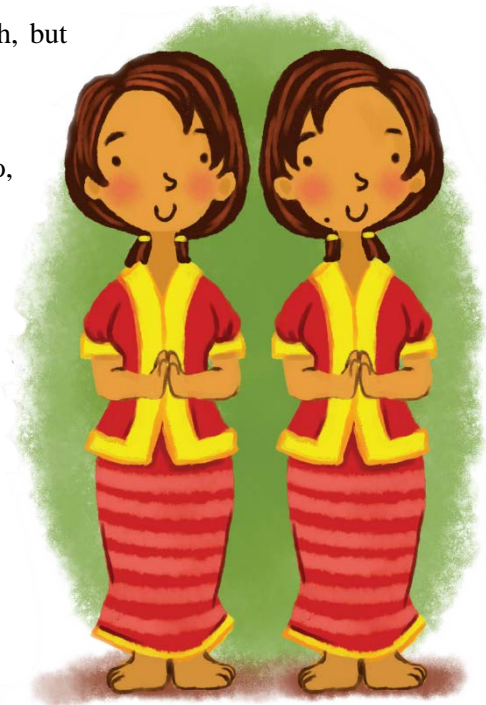
“Your Majesty, why would it be impossible? You could take one of them by any means.”

“How do you think I should do it, Mangkubumi?”

“Let’s just kidnap one of them. Oh, but which one would you like to take?”

“Isn’t it a noble thing to do, moreover by a sultan like me?”

“I will try to do it in a more noble way, but it seems impossible. The buffalo mother will not give her daughters away. Ah, Your Majesty, there is no other way than kidnapping one of the girls.



They are not citizens of our sultanate, anyway.”

Sultan Salehudin was head over heels with the beauty of the young women that he could no longer think clearly.

He agreed with Mangkubumi’s idea and they decided to put it into action the following morning. But beforehand, the Sultan ordered his entourage to immediately return to the palace, cancelling their unsuccessful hunt.

The following morning, Sultan Salehudin and Mangkubumi returned to the hut surrounded by those big trees. They immediately carved a way through the thicket among the trunks very carefully.

From the slit of the bushes, they saw the mother buffalo walking towards a gap between the trees accompanied by her two daughters.

“Take care of yourselves, My Daughters. Do not let anything bad happen while I am away,” said the mother buffalo.

“Mother, I am getting scared now,” said one of the daughters.
“You’d better stay here,” said the other one.

“Ah, but if I don’t go, what will you eat then?” said the mother buffalo. “Well, I have to go and find food for you. But remember my message to not make any noise. You may play, but you

should not go outside the fence of these trees. Today you don't have to search grass for me since there are some left from yesterday, am I correct?"

Finally the mother buffalo went outside through the gap between the trees, followed by the worried eyes of her two daughters. When she was already gone, the two young women went back inside the hut.

"Now it's time to kidnap one of them," whispered Mangkubumi.

"Wait until the buffalo is really far away from here," said Sultan Salehudin.

They waited while keeping an eye on the two young women. Sultan Salehudin stared at them carefully, trying to decide which one was the prettiest. It was very difficult as both were equally tender and beautiful. There was no slightest difference between them.

After waiting for quite some time, Sultan Salehudin gave a sign to Mangkubumi who nodded at him with comprehension. Both then came out of the bushes.

The two young women were taken aback when they saw the two strangers. They screamed out loud, calling for their mother.

However, before they could do anything else, the Sultan caught one of them and took her outside.

The other one tried to help her sister, but Mangkubumi stood in her way. She could only cry and scream, while her sister was taken away by the Sultan.

Sultan Salehudin carried the young woman he had kidnapped through the gap which the buffalo had used to go out of the fence. He could feel the young woman struggled hard to set herself free from his hands.

“I like you and I swear I do not have any intention to hurt you!” said Sultan Salehudin when he put her on the saddle of his horse.



The young woman's eyes sparkled when her gaze met the Sultan's. She had struggled because she was scared, and so her face had also turned pale. But now she had stopped struggling, even stayed still when the Sultan hopped on and sat behind her.

“What is your name?” asked the Sultan.

“Siti Mardinah,” answered the young woman timidly.

Sultan Salehudin made his horse gallop faster. He was truly relieved because the young woman no longer showed any intention to set herself free while she was taking her on the horse. Behind him, Mangkubumi also spurred his horse.

The dusk crawled into the night. The skies started to become dark with black clouds. The jungle, which had been comfortable for Siti Partinah, was no longer so. Throughout the day until the night fell, she kept weeping for Siti Mardinah who had been kidnapped by those strangers.

The Missing Siti Mardinah

Siti Mardinah and Siti Partinah were the names of the mother buffalo's daughters. Both were born almost at the same time as identical twins. That's why their faces and figures were indistinguishable. The only difference between them was their voice, which could only be recognized by the mother buffalo.

As human beings, they had different habits than their mother. The mother buffalo made a living from morning to afternoon, while her two daughters waited at home. Despite their conspicuous difference their mother and daughters relationship was intimate.

Towards the afternoon, the mother buffalo came home with a bundle of food for her two daughters hanging around her neck. But she was shocked to see Siti Partinah weeping inside their hut.

"Partinah, stop crying. Where is your sister Siti Mardinah?" asked the mother buffalo while stroking her daughter's forehead with her snout.

Siti Partinah stopped crying while hugging her mother's neck. Then she said, "Mother, we are in danger, Siti Mardinah has been kidnapped!"

The mother buffalo's mouth was agape, "Kidnapped? Who has kidnapped her?" she asked.

Siti Partinah told her what had happened.

“Oh, my Lord, what I had been afraid of finally happened. That’s why I felt so uneasy all day long,” said the mother buffalo, looking up with sad tears flowing from her eyes.

“Mother, I do not want to be separated from Siti Mardinah. Could you please help her?” asked Siti Partinah.

The mother buffalo was quiet with her head bowed.

“Can you tell me the looks and clothes of those kidnappers?” she asked.

Siti Partinah stuttered when she told her mother how the fateful event had happened.

The mother buffalo suspected that the kidnappers of her daughter were those people she had seen around the camp. Then, she asked Siti Partinah to wait there.

“Where are you going now?” asked Partinah.

“Hopefully I can still find your sister and set her free from those kidnappers’ hands,” replied the mother buffalo. “You stay here and do not go outside the house.”

“Oh, Mother, I am so scared. Probably I’d better come with you.”

“No. It is dangerous if any human sees you. You’d better stay here and wait. Do not forget what I said.”

The mother buffalo then went out of her house. With steps full of anxiety, she trotted towards the camp she had seen the other day, hoping to find her daughter there. However, she was startled to see just the remains of the camp. Her mind was confused and her heart was perturbed. By using her sharp sense of smell, the mother buffalo kept tracing the footprints of the kidnappers.

After a while, she saw a multitude of people gather at the village hall. She came closer quickly and tried to listen to their conversation.

“Early this afternoon, Sultan Salehudin came back from the hunt without his entourage. He passed by our village, accompanied only by Mangkubumi,” said one of the people at the village hall. That was all that those people talked about at the village hall.

“I saw them with my own eyes. The Sultan rode his horse together with a young woman.” “A young woman?”

“Yes, she was stunning. The Sultan made her sit in front of his horse’s saddle. Ah, who on earth is that young woman?” “I think she might be a princess.”

“A princess? Is it possible that a princess lives in a jungle?” asked the other.

From their conversation, the mother buffalo was very sure that they were talking about Siti Mardinah. She took a deep breath and then left the village. In the darkness of the night, she returned to the jungle with a confused mind.

“Was it Sultan Salehudin who kidnapped Siti Mardinah?” she wondered inside. “If that is true, actually I am not scared because he is the offspring of wise people with golden heart as well. He surely will treat Siti Mardinah very well. But what will he do with my daughter?”

After reaching home, the mother told Siti Partinah about what the villagers had said regarding Siti Mardinah.

“Mother, why did Sultan Salehudin kidnap Siti Mardinah?” asked Siti Partinah.

“I don’t know.”

“How can we help Siti Mardinah, Mother?”

“The palace is not an ordinary house,” replied the mother buffalo. “It is secured by the armed guards. They will for sure prevent us from going inside.”

“Oh, really? How can you still free Siti Mardinah then, before the Sultan hurts her?”

“He will not hurt her.”

“Do you know that royal family?”

The mother buffalo stared at Siti Partinah with beaming eyes. Her mouth was about to talk again, but she did not utter any sound. She finally bowed down and stayed quiet. “Mother?” The mother buffalo did not respond.

“Mother, what’s the matter?”

“My Daughter Siti Partinah, actually there is something I have been hiding from you and Siti Mardinah.” “Oh, really? What is it, Mother?”

“Oh, it’s hard to explain it, Dear. But would you like to help me out?”

“Of course I do. What can I do for you?”

The mother buffalo spoke tenderly, “Let us meditate together to ask for direction from the Almighty. For that, we need to fast and forget about the worldly matters,” she explained.

“Mother, if that can help Siti Mardinah, of course I am willing to do it. But, how long do we have to meditate?”

“I don’t know for sure. Before we get the direction we hope for, our meditation is not finished yet.”

Siti Partinah was lost in thought for a while. But not long after that, she opened her mouth again. “No matter how long it takes, I am ready, Mother, for the sake of Siti Mardinah,” she said.

The mother and her daughter, who were very different in their nature, decided then to start meditating together.

One night, Siti Mardinah was sitting by herself, enjoying the beauty of the night. Even though she had been kidnapped by Sultan Salehudin, she did not show any hint of fear. Everybody in the palace was also happy with her presence.

Siti Mardinah had been staying in the palace for three days. She was given a special room with beautiful decorations. Several maids kept her company and were always ready to help when she needed them.

No matter how much pleasure Siti Mardinah enjoyed there, her mind kept coming back to her mother and sister and it made her very sad.

The Sultan Asked Siti Mardinah to Be His Wife

On the fourth day, Sultan Salehudin came to visit Siti Mardinah. The Sultan always showed her a sweet and solemn attitude. His manner always made Siti Mardinah feel at ease.

“Siti Mardinah, is there any maid that does not treat you well?” asked Sultan Salehudin.

“Oh no, Sultan, all of the maids treat me very well,” responded Siti Mardinah.

“If so, why do you look so sad?”

“Because I do not understand why I was brought here.”

“Oh, Lovely Siti Mardinah. Just as I have said to you once, I do not have any bad intention to you.” “What do you mean, Sultan?”

“Siti Mardinah, you are a gorgeous young woman. I would like to make you my queen.” “Your queen? Your Majesty, did you mean, that I will...”

“I will take you as my wife.”

“Oh, really, Sultan? I would be very happy to live in the palace, but...”

“But what, Siti Mardinah?” “How about my mother and sister in the jungle?”

“Do not worry about them. When you become my official wife, I will take them to live in this palace.”

“Really?” “Why would I lie?” “But...” “But what, Siti Mardinah?”

“Don’t you feel ashamed because...” “Because your mother is a buffalo?”

“That’s right, Your Majesty.” “I am sure that she is actually not a buffalo.”

“What do you mean, Your Majesty?”

“I am sure that your mother is a princess. Maybe even a fairy. Only that she is being punished now so she has to live as a buffalo.”

“Oh, do you know why my mother received such a punishment?”

“Ah, I was hoping to ask you about it, Siti Mardinah?”

“Ah, too bad, I don’t know anything about it, Your Majesty.”

“Siti Mardinah, I am sorry that I took you in a way that I myself did not really approve. I have kidnapped you,” admitted the Sultan.

“I myself am wondering, why you had a heart to do such thing. I think, if only you had made a polite request to my mother to take me, she would not have any objection for sure.”

“I was deeply confused, Siti Mardinah. Moreover when I saw the appearance of your mother and your house which is located very deep in the jungle,” said the Sultan, before he grew quiet for awhile. “Let the past be the past, and I will rectify my bad behavior. After we get married, I will meet your mother to apologize and ask her to be willing to live in my palace here.”

“Is that true, Your Majesty?”

“But you have to be willing to be my wife first,” the Sultan asked for Siti Mardinah’s confirmation about her willingness marry him.

“Of course, Your Majesty, I am willing to,” said Siti Mardiah without any doubt.

Sultan Salehudin was filled with joy. He soon announced to the whole country that he would make Siti Mardinah his queen. Their

wedding would be celebrated with great fanfare by inviting all sultans in the whole Sumbawa.

All residents of the palace were happy to hear the announcement. They were grateful that the Sultan who they adored finally found the woman of his dreams.

All things pertinent to the wedding had been prepared. All royal courtiers and servants were preparing everything to be served in the wedding ceremony. The palace was decorated beautifully. The tents were set up and beautified with all kinds of colorful flowers and banners.

Invitations were immediately sent to the neighboring sultanates, such as the Sultanates of Goa, Dompu, and Sumbawa.

The Wedding of Sultan Salehudin with Mardinah

The wedding of Sultan Salehudin and Siti Mardinah was merry, with people from every country flocking to the palace. People from various classes had the opportunity to enjoy the joyous ceremony.

Various art performances were presented onstage. Many dances, plays, and stunt shows were presented to the people's enjoyment. Delicious foods and drinks were also served to the guests.

The whole country was joyful as smiles and laughters echoed incessantly. Meanwhile, the stunning bride was showered with compliments and grateful praises. She looked radiant like a fairy that had just descended from the heavens. The bride sat together with the good-looking and charming Sultan.

Among the guests there were Sultan Dompu, Sultan Goa, and Sultan Sumbawa. They looked happy and lifted up their prayers for the newlyweds.

Sultan Dompu, Sultan Goa, and Sultan Sumbawa were old friends. They had a close relationship and were respected by other sultans. These three sultans were old bestfriends who often gathered together as if they had been three brothers from one ancestor. However, Sultan Dompu who came without his queen

looked anxious when he saw Siti Mardinah. It was as if he were lost in a poignant old memory.

“What’s the matter, Brother? Why do you look sad? Aren’t we here to celebrate a joyful occasion?” asked Sultan Goa, while taking a cup of honey from the serving table.

“Are you fascinated by the beauty of Siti Mardinah? I notice that you have not been able to take your eyes off her.”

“Yes, she is gorgeous. Blessed is Sultan Salehudin who has married her. But, how old is she? It looks like she has the same age with my daughter,” replied Sultan Sumbawa, gazing at the bridal dais.

“Siti Mardinah is indeed beautiful,” said Sultan Dompu in his heart. “However, her face made me wonder because it resembles someone I knew very well.”

“What do you mean?” asked Sultan Goa and Sultan Sumbawa in unison. “Who are you talking about?”

“A face of someone dear to my heart, who has been gone for so long,” mumbled Sultan Dompu.

The other two sultans stared at each other in wonder.

“Do you know who Siti Mardinah is?” asked Sultan Dompu.



“No,” answered Sultan Sumbawa and Sultan Goa at the same time. “I am afraid that they would think we want to meddle with the family matters of Sultan Salehudin,” added Sultan Sumbawa.

“But I heard that Sultan Salehudin found her when he was hunting in the jungle,” said Sultan Goa.

“In a jungle? Which jungle?” “The jungle at the foot of Mount Londa.”

“Oh,” Sultan Dompou took a long deep breath. “Why?”

“Isn’t that jungle located within my sultanate territory?” asked Sultan Dompou.

Sultan Goa and Sultan Sumbawa stared at each other again in surprise. They realized and acknowledged the truth in what Sultan Dompou had said.

“I am such an unfortunate old man that I do not know anything about Siti Mardinah, though she came from my own sultanate territory!” mumbled Sultan Dompou while wiping his wrinkled forehead.

“What are you thinking about now?” whispered Sultan Goa.

“I would like to know who Siti Mardinah is. I will ask about it directly to Sultan Salehudin so he could explain it,” said Sultan Dompou.

“I agree that we have to get to know the wife of our sultan friend,” said Sultan Goa.

“However, we have to be careful not to disturb their happiness right now. If you would like to ask about it, it is better to wait until this wedding party is over,” suggested Sultan Sumbawa.

Sultan Dompou shrugged his shoulders while his gaze returned to Siti Mardinah. Then he bowed his head with a furrowed forehead and left the party to go alone the side part of the palace garden.

Sultan Goa and Sultan Sumbawa became more perplexed. “What on earth has happened to our brother?” Sultan Goa wondered.

“From what he said, it looks like he was lost in an old memory. I mean, the face of Siti Mardinah has reminded him to someone he very dear to his heart,” replied Sultan Sumbawa. “Who is that person?”

“Now I know who that person who has perturbed the mind of our brother Sultan Dompou,” said Sultan Sumbawa, nodding his head with comprehension. “You know, we are very close to each other.”

“Really? Who is that person?” asked Sultan Goa anxiously.

“The queen of Sultan Dompou!” “Oh?”

“We both know that Sultan Dompou came here without his queen.”

“Yes, I heard his queen had long disappeared in a strange way.”

“You’re right! His queen strangely disappeared about eighteen years ago. It was such a hard time for him that from then on he seemed to have lost his anchor because he truly loves his queen.

“Siti Mardinah’s face resembled that of Sultan Dompou’s queen, right?”

“That’s right!”

“Oh, it might have triggered his memory about their sweet time together before she disappeared, and that’s why his mind is now troubled, having seen Siti Mardinah.”

“That could be it! But who is Siti Mardinah actually?”

“I have no idea.”

Back to Real Life

The wedding ceremony of Sultan Salehudin and Siti Mardinah was finally over. Sultan Dompou returned to his sultanate just like the other sultans, hiding his deep curiosity about the origins of Siti Mardinah.

The honey mood period of Sultan Salehudin dan Siti Mardinah was filled with joy. Their happiness was clearly reflected in their beaming faces.

On the contrary, since he came back to his palace, Sultan Dompou did not talk much and often isolated himself, making everybody in his palace sad.

A week after the wedding party of Sultan Salehudin, Sultan Dompou returned to the palace of Sultan Salehudin accompanied by his entourage. They were welcomed gladly by the couple, who looked radiant.

“I hope you are not surprised with my sudden arrival,” said Sultan Dompou when Sultan Salehudin welcomed him.

“Oh, no, Your Majesty,” replied Sultan Salehudin happily. “I am not surprised by your visit, in fact, I am delighted because this shows that our sultanates have a close relationship,” he added.

Sultan Salehudin received the arrival of Sultan Dompou as he would have received a prominent guest. Sultan Dompou was much older than him so that he might have as well taken him for his own father.

Sultan Dompou then explained the purpose of his coming with pleasantries and tender words to avoid the impression that he actually intended to investigate the parentage of Siti Mardinah.

Sultan Salehudin told him how he had met Siti Mardinah for the first time.

“It was such an incredible story,” commented Sultan Dompou, having listened to Sultan Salehudin’s story. “What is your plan now after Siti Mardinah became your official queen?”

“I plan to take her mother and sister to my palace,” said Sultan Salehudin, “even though it might become the talk in the whole country. It might even reach the neighboring sultanates.”

“That you have a buffalo as your mother in-law, that’s what people would say, right?” asked Sultan Dompou.

“That’s right. However, she is still the mother of my queen. I will still bring her to my palace.”

“I am sure that she is not an ordinary buffalo like you said, Your Majesty. The buffalo can talk just like us. It is a sign that she is

not merely a random buffalo. Sultan, if you do not mind, allow me to come with you to meet her. Maybe I could help in persuading her so that they would be willing to live in your palace.”

“I am so glad that you have such a noble intention, Sultan Dompu. Why not? Let us go together to that jungle in Mount Londa. Could you please tell me, Sultan Dompu, what makes you want to see her?”

“I will explain about it later. Trust me that I have no bad intention in doing so.”

Siti Partinah and the mother buffalo had been meditating for several days without eating or drinking. They completely forgot about the wordly matters.

Siti Partinah was meditating in a sitting position. Her eyes were closed and both hands were folded in front of her chest. Meanwhile, the mother buffalo was meditating by folding her two feet, as if she were sleeping. Had it not been for the breath, they would have looked like two statues.

While the wedding ceremony of her sister, Siti Mardinah and Sultan Salehudin, was being held at the palace of Bima Sultanate, Siti Partinah could feel something strange happening to her mother. Her heart throbbed. Unable to refrain herself, she

unconsciously opened her eyes and was shocked to see her mother buffalo's body trembling.

“Mother, what is happening to you?” shrieked Siti Partinah as she stepped backward. She completely forgot that she was supposed to be meditating.

The body of mother buffalo was shaking harder as if there had been an earthquake. Then it slowly vanished and was transformed into a cloud bluish white smoke.

“Mother? Oh, what is happening?” screamed Siti Partinah at her wits' end.

Having turned into a cloud of bluish white smoke, the mother buffalo now turned into a human being with a slender figure and was slowly changed into a meditating elderly woman.

“Oh, who are you, Elderly Lady? Where is my mother?” asked Siti Partinah.

Though the skin of the elderly woman had wrinkles, she still looked pretty. She opened her eyes and stared at Siti Partinah with teary eyes, before lifting both of her hands and looked up to the skies.

“Oh, My Almighty Lord, I am deeply grateful because I have turned into the way I used to be,” said the elderly woman with a trembling voice, full of emotions.

Siti Partinah heard that voice and recognized it as her mother’s. However, she could not understand what had happened to her. The elderly woman stood up and walked towards her.

“My Daughter Siti Partinah, I am your mother!” said the elderly woman.

“Are you? Ah, it’s impossible. I don’t know you. You are not my mother, but...” stuttered Siti Partinah.

“Yes, your mother used to appear as a buffalo indeed, but it was not her real body. It was due to the witchcraft of an evil woman who envied me because I had married a sultan. Now the power of that witchcraft has been broken. My Daughter, I am your real mother. Come to me now!”

“Oh, Mother!” cried Siti Partinah, jumping to her feet to hug the elderly woman.

They embraced each other tightly with mixed emotions as tears kept flowing from their eyes. They sat down and continued to hug each other affectionately for quite some time.



“My Daughter Partinah,” said the elderly woman, releasing her daughter from her embrace. “I am actually the queen of one of the sultans in Sumbawa.” “Oh, really?”

“Twenty years ago, a sultan proposed to me. Then we got married and I became a queen. Oh, I was so happy. My husband loved me and cared for me with all of his heart.

He was a true gentleman. Not only handsome and brave, he was also just and wise. But...” “But what, Mother?”

“But there was someone jealous at me. She wanted to snatch away my happiness with all of her dirty tricks. She came to the sultan and asked him to make her his wife as well. My husband, Sultan Dompou, did not want to accept her because I was the only woman he loved. Despite his delicate and polite refusal, the woman could not accept it. She came home with a heart rotten by bitterness towards us.”

“And then?”

“That woman considered me as a stumbling block to achieve her dreams. She knew that her dreams to become a queen would never come true as long as I lived. Therefore she looked for a nasty shaman and a witch.”

“What for, Mother?” “To get rid of me.” “To kill you, Mother?”

“Yes, in a subtle way.” “Then?”

“Those nasty shaman and witch exerted their black magic to cast an evil spell on me. However, the Almighty never sleeps. God always protect innocent people. I was immune to the withcraft because I was expecting. However, I was turned into a buffalo ever since.” “Oh, so you were pregnant at that time, Mother?”

“Yes, I was pregnant with the fruit of our love in form of twin daughters, you and Siti Mardinah.” “Did Sultan Dompou know about it, Mother?”

“No. I thought it would be better if the Sultan never found out about it. Only my guards knew it all well. I decided to leave the palace secretly to go elsewhere. Unexpectedly, those guards wanted to come along with me. They declared their loyalty and swore that they would rather die than be separated from me.”

“Oh, what a loyalty. Then what happened to you, Mother?”

“I left the palace with my guards without anybody knowing. We walked through the dark night and after some time we finally arrived in Londa jungle. The guards made me a hut to live in. Then, I asked those guards to return to their own home but they refused and insisted to stay with me. They all even uttered an oath, saying that they would prefer to be transformed into protecting trees around the hut than to be separated from me.

Shortly afterwards a miracle happened. Having uttered their oath, they were turned into the big trees which are now protecting our hut.”

“Incredible! Now that you have turned into a queen again, aren’t those trees going to become like they used to be?” “Let’s see.”

They marveled to see that the big and tall trees which had been the protecting fence of the hut had disappeared. All of them had turned back into those loyal guards. They all came close to the hut and knelt down with reverence.

The Queen and Siti Partinah were deeply moved. Their faces glowed with radiant joy.



A Happy Ending

In a sunny morning, Sultan Salehudin and his queen, as well as Sultan Dompou, departed to Londa jungle, accompanied by the guards.

During their trip, Sultan Dompou did his best to not stare at Siti Mardinah., though he was tempted to because his own queen's face always lingered on his mind. When they arrived inside Londa jungle, all of them, in particular Sultan Salehudin and his queen, were very surprised because they could no longer find those tall and big trees which used to protect the hut. The hut itself was still intact, but it was not quiet as it used to be.

The guards came out of the hut looking alert to prevent unwanted events from happening. Behind them, Siti Partinah and her mother came out side to side. They welcomed the arrival of the group with throbbing hearts.

Sultan Salehudin could not help but pondering in his heart when Siti Mardinah walked towards Siti Partinah. They hugged each other and cried emotionally.

“Siti Mardinah, you look so beautiful. Ah, how happy I am to see you,” said Siti Partinah with beaming eyes, when she saw the fine clothes that her twin sister was wearing.

“I am also happy to see you again, Siti Partinah. But where is mother? Who is this elderly woman next to you?” asked Siti Mardinah while staring at the lovely woman next to her twin sister.

“Siti Mardinah, she is our mother!” replied Siti Partinah, who then briefly explained to her about everything.

“Oh, is that true?” asked Siti Mardinah while coming closer to her mother.

Her mother came closer to hug her with tears running down her cheeks.

“Yes, I am your mother. After being cursed and turned into a buffalo for so long, now I have returned to be a human again,” said her mother with a raspy voice.

“Mother? Oh, how happy I am!”

In the meantime, Sultan Dompou watched closely the movements of twins’ mother. His heart was freed from any doubt; that woman is indeed her queen.

“My Dear Queen!” cried Sultan Dompou.

The mother was startled to hear that call. She released Siti Mardinah from her embrace and stared at Sultan Dompou with a searching glance.

“My King Sultan Dompou? Oh, finally the Almighty reunited us again!” said the queen while running towards Sultan Dompou.

All of the people there were watching the scene with teary eyes, and later on the queen knelt down in front of Sultan Dompou.

“Forgive me, My King Sultan Dompou,” implored the queen. Sultan Dompou took the hand of his queen and invited her to stand up, before hugging her warmly.

Finding his queen again cheered up Sultan Dompou’s heart. The couple seemed to be having fun relishing their old memories and talking to each other fondly.

“Since I saw Siti Mardinah for the first time, I was so sure that she was your daughter, our daughter. Siti Mardinah’s face resembles yours, My Queen,” said Sultan Dompou with teary eyes.

The queen then called her twin daughters.

“My Daughters, this is your father. Show your respect to him,” said the mother of Siti Mardinah and Siti Partinah.

The twins rushed to them and in no time they were already in Sultan Dompou's embrace. Everybody was filled with emotions and joy.

“What has actually happened?” asked Sultan Salehudin who had been quiet before.

Sultan Dompou explained the whole story to him. Sultan Salehudin then knelt down in reverence. He was not hesitant to do so in front of Sultan Dompou, who turned out to be his father-in-law.

“Now everything has come to a good end. The Almighty has shown His greatness by returning my queen who had been missing for eighteen years. Oh, I am truly grateful. As for the evil woman who caused it, let God alone punish her.”

“But, how could you turn into who you are now?” asked Siti Mardinah.

“Since you were taken away by the dear Sultan Salehudin, Siti Partinah and I started to meditate to ask for a direction from the Almighty. And then, having meditated for a long time, my buffalo body was transformed into this again,” said the queen of Sultan Dompou, who was also the mother of Siti Mardinah.

Sultan Salehudin came closer to the queen of Sultan Dompu and said, “Dear Mother, please forgive me. I have dared to take away Siti Mardinah from you,” he said.

“There is nothing to be forgiven. I have forgotten everything and I am pleased to know that you have made Siti Mardinah your queen.”

With great joy, Sultan Salehudin and Siti Mardinah returned to the palace of Bima Sultanate.

Finally, Sultan Dompu was happy to be reunited with his queen and Siti Partinah. Not long afterwards, Sultan Dompu received a proposal from Sultan Sumbawa which was addressed to Siti Partinah, to be married to Sultan Sumbawa’s son.

Sultan Dompu gladly accepted the proposal, especially since Siti Partinah herself was willing to become Sultan Sumbawa’s daughter in-law. The wedding ceremony was held merrily, as merry as the wedding of Sultan Salehudin and Siti Mardinah.

They all lived happily ever after.

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Informasi Lain:

Lahir di Tamianglayang pada tanggal 10 Maret 1976. Lebih dari sepuluh tahun ini, terlibat dalam penyuntingan naskah di beberapa lembaga, seperti di Lemhanas, Bappenas, Mahkamah Konstitusi, dan Bank Indonesia. Di lembaga tempatnya bekerja, dia terlibat dalam penyuntingan buku Seri Penyuluhan dan buku cerita rakyat.