

THE WEAVING AND THE CROWN PRINCE
Kain Tenun dan Putra Mahkota

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THE WEAVING AND THE CROWN PRINCE

Peria Pokak

It was almost dusk, and the sun had just greeted the western horizon. Buffaloes and cows over the dried rice paddies were approaching a hamlet in the Priangan realm. Shepherds played merrily in the vast rice paddies. The squeal and the moos of the buffaloes and cows described the serenity and peace of the village. Smoke puffed from the roofs of the houses that looked like a giant's cigarette smoke, indicating that the people were preparing their dinner.

On an embankment of rice paddies, a girl was with her seven aunts. The seven aunts were still teenagers. The girl was called Peria Pokak. Their laughter reflected the happiness of teenage girls. Peria Pokak is a tall and slender girl who was approaching her sixteen years of age. She looked very modest as she's a daughter of a poor widow. She lived with her mother somewhere around the outskirts of the village. They lived modest lives. Her mother worked as a serf. One day Peria Pokak was asked to accompany her aunts to Lamben Well. Actually that had not been the true intention. The seven aunts wanted to see the man they favoured. The man was the crown prince of the kingdom. The well was located nearby the playground of the crown prince. They

bathed and played around the Lamben well on purpose, in the hope that the prince would see them. Nearby the Lamben well stood a shady tree. It was located by the road. There, the crown prince Datuk Teruna usually played with Kajarode, his aide. Many girls intentionally passed the area hoping the prince would see them, including Peria Pokak's aunts. When the seven aunts passed the tree, the prince was very happy. He admired Peria's beauty. The seven aunts were burning inside by the fact that the prince praised Peria Pokak.

Seven Angels

This morning, as usual, Peria Pokak reached her aunts' house. She started doing some errands. Before noon, she was called to meet her aunts at the terrace of the house. "Peria Pokak, come here," her eldest aunt called. "What is it, Auntie?"

"I'd like to take you for a walk in the forest tomorrow morning."

"In the forest?" Peria Pokak shouted in disbelief. "You're rejecting us?" asked another aunt. "No, it's not that, Auntie, it's not your habit to stroll in the forest," answered Peria Pokak.

Finally, Peria Pokak accepted her aunts' wish. She told her mother about the plan to stroll in the forest.

"Mother, tomorrow morning aunties will take me to the forest," said Peria Pokak.

“Yeah, if it’s only for a walk, go ahead, Kiddo. I just want to remind you to be careful and just follow your aunties’ wishes,” replied her mother.

That noon the weather seemed to befriend Peria Pokak and her seven aunts. Breezy wind blew gently, as though wanting to accompany the aunts of Peria Pokak to the forest. “Peria Pokak, find some good twigs and branches. We’ll find some of those ourselves,” said the eldest aunt.

“Alright, Aunty, I’ll go look,” replied Peria Pokak. They started to find twigs and branches. Peria Pokak picked twigs and branches that she thought good. Without her aunts noticing, Peria Pokak left the area and she walked deeper into the forest. Peria Pokak didn’t realize that she’d been far apart from her aunts. The path that she was on right now led to a very beautiful place. Peria Pokak was amazed by the beautiful scenery. Before her was a plain with green grasses on it, and adjacent to it there was a hill where many kinds of blossoming flowers had grown. She hadn’t finished admiring the beautiful scenery when suddenly seven beautiful angels come into her sight.

“Fear not, Peria Pokak. We are good angels. We shall do you no harm. Please, come with us,” said the seven angels.

“We will take you to our place in the fairyland. Now, close your eyes,” said one of the angels. Suddenly, Peria Pokak arrived in a

place much more beautiful than the place she had just seen. In that place, Peria Pokak was taught how to weave. The angels were excited about Peria Pokak as she was a quick learner. During the time in fairyland, she managed to finish some pieces of weavings. When evening was approaching, Peria Pokak was returned to the place where she had met the angels. She was given two pieces of weavings. One for her, and one for her mother. The angels inserted the two weavings into the segments of some moldy bamboos.

The bamboos were then tied with some other woods. Peria Pokak's aunts were furious when Peria Pokak finally came to them. "Peria Pokak, where have you been? We have been waiting for you so long. We would have left you here in this forest hadn't we feel sorry for you," said one of the aunts.

"I was looking for some woods, Auntie," replied Peria Pokak.

"Where are the woods that you fetched?" asked one of the aunts.

"What a bad girl, why did you fetch some moldy bamboos? Why don't you throw them away, and bring these good woods," replied another aunt. But she insisted on keeping the moldy bamboos anyhow. When she arrived at home, she told her mother all her experiences in the forest and how she finally met the good seven angels. Peria Pokak didn't forget to tell her mother that the angels had taught her how to weave.

“Oh, my dear child, look at how beautiful your weavings are. They’ll make us look like the riches. Vermins like us don’t deserve to wear these beautiful weavings,” said her mother. This morning, unlike any other morning, the seven aunts of Peria Pokak had been up before Peria Pokak reached their house. They were busy preparing some dye. As soon as they saw Peria Pokak, the seven aunts dragged her closer and smeared her with the dye. She struggled hard to get loose to no avail.

“Cut the craps, Peria. A wretched and poor girl like you don’t deserve the compliment of a crown prince.” Though covered in dye, the crown prince still admired Peria Pokak’s beauty.

“Kajarode, listen to what I said. Peria Pokak is as beautiful as her aunts. Nobody could even match her beauty!” The seven aunts felt thunderstruck as they heard Datuk Teruna still flattered Peria Pokak’s beauty. That noon, the seven aunts took Peria Pokak to the forest again to get some woods. As they reached the forest, Peria Pokak went alone. She didn’t want to join her aunts. When she found a perfect moment, she left her aunts. She went to the place where she’d met the seven angels.

Peria Pokak then told the angels her sadness. “That’s alright, Peria, don’t be sad!”

Then the angels bathed Peria Pokak with all their love.

With patience, the seven angels then taught Peria Pokak how to weave one more time. Unwittingly, Peria Pokak had been with the angels for quite some time. She then asked to be delivered to the place where her seven aunts had been. Her aunts were furious when this time Peria Pokak came with only some moldy bamboos. They were disappointed as she approaches them carrying such an ugly bamboo.

“Peria Pokak, can’t you be picky about good and bad woods?” snapped one of her aunts. “I only manage to find this kind of woods, Aunty, so, forgive me.”

“Alright, fine, take those moldy bamboos home with you and don’t ask for our favour.”

The Meaning of a Dream

This morning, the Crown Prince Datuk Teruna didn’t look cheerful as usual. The Crown Prince who was the only child of the King looked depressed. His good looks and gallantry had been known through the entire kingdom. He had always been escorted by Kajarode everywhere he went. Karajode was bewildered about his lord since morning. It was almost noon, yet the Crown Prince hadn’t gone to the park as usual. It turned out that the Crown Prince was in a confusion due to the dream he had the night before.

“Kajarode, I want to tell you something.”

“Spread the words, My Lord. I will listen to you if it makes you happy.”

“Kajarode, last night I had a dream. It really worried me.”

“What dream was it, My Lord?” asked Kajarode as he wanted to know his master’s dream immediately.

“In the dream I saw a very beautiful moon. It was perfectly circle. Suddenly the moon fell onto my lap and then I was awakened,” said the prince as he sighed and went on.

“Kajarode, do you know the meaning of my dream? I am deeply troubled.”

Kajarode immediately went to see the King as he felt bound to tell him the Crown Prince’s dream. The King didn’t dare to say the meaning of his son’s dream. He wanted to invite some sages to tell the meaning of the dream.

Soon, the palace was full of sages, enchanters, sorcerers, and shamans from all corners of the kingdom who wanted to try to decipher the meaning of the Crown Prince’s dream. The King then met them. The King said, “My son dreamed that the moon had fallen onto his lap, and the dream had made him restless.”

“The Crown Prince’s dream was very good, Sire. It means that he will prevail in everything he does. If he goes fishing, or captures birds, he will succeed in all.”

“Kajarode, I will then ask father’s permission to capture birds to the forest. Then, I’ll also ask people to fish.” The King agreed to his son’s wish without hesitation.

All things required for hunting were prepped. The Crown Prince brought some Moto Seong made of black sticky rice. The condition of the Crown Prince and Kajarode in the forest was miserable.

They’d hiked many hills and mountains, valleys and cliffs alike. They finally arrived at a very beautiful valley where there was a very big and tall tree. They sat under the tree. “Kajarode, why don’t you try to climb this tree, who knows you could see some sources of water.” Kajarode soon climbed the tree. He could see that in a vast distance there was a puff of smoke. The place was very far. They had to pass five enormous mountains in order to reach the place he’d seen. They started to hike through the forest in order to reach the first mountain. They were about to go on to the second mountain. Before them there was a wide and steep river. They then managed to cross the river. The Crown Prince and Kajarode continued their journey through the grooves of the valley and the slopes of the mountain where bushy and black plants had grown. They now reached the third mountain. They then continued their journey to the fourth mountain. Finally, they arrived at a place where big trees had grown and their roots spread everywhere. Before continuing their journey to the fifth

mountain, they decided to rest for a while. Suddenly, they heard a loud sound of some weaving device. They both heard the blaring sound.

“Kajarode, did you hear that?” asked Datuk Teruna.

“It’s the sound of a weaving device, My Lord!” answered Kajarode.

“That’s right, Kajarode, that’s the sound you hear when someone’s weaving. It means there’s someone around. Thank You, O, The Creator, You’ve answered our prayers.”

The sound the Crown Prince had heard came from Peria Pokak’s weaving device. The arrival of Datuk Teruna and Kajarode shocked Peria Pokak who was weaving intently. Peria Pokak was horrified.

“O, angels, angels...” shouted Peria Pokak anxiously

“What is it, Peria Pokak? You look frightened?” asked one of the angels.

“Please, take me home immediately, angels. They are very close. Ee.... The Crown Prince and Kajarode,” Peria Pokak replied in stutter.

“Impossible, Peria Pokak, how could they reached this place?”

“Be patient Peria Pokak,” said one of the angels attempting to calm Peria Pokak.

“Don’t be afraid, Peria Pokak. We are leaving soon.”

Datuk Teruna and Kajarode found a shallow well that had clear water. Beside the well, they found a bowl used to get some water.

They decided to continue their journey. When they wanted to leave the spot, suddenly Datuk Teruna’s goad was hooked to something. He pulled the hook to no avail. “Ummm... what is this, Kajarode?” asked Datuk Teruna.

“It’s a thread, My Lord! Oh, look at how smooth it is.” Their gaze suddenly fell upon a hut. “My Lord, look, there’s a hut,” shouted Kajarode. Datuk Teruna and Kajarode approached the hut. They were surprised to see a piece of weaving on in the hut. It was a very beautiful piece of weaving.

“Who owns this beautiful weaving? Kajarode, quick, go up the hut and take the weaving,” commanded Datuk Teruna.

“Kajarode, I want to go home. I think having this beautiful weaving is enough for me.”

Weaving Competition

The return of the Crown Prince and Kajarode brought utter relief to the King and the Queen as well as all courtiers. They praised The Almighty as the son of their lord returned home safely.

“Tell me, Son. We’d be happy to hear your story,” said the Queen. The Crown Prince started to tell his journey up to the moment when he finally found the beautiful weaving. “Can we see the weaving, Son?” The Crown Prince immediately fetched the weaving and showed it to his parent.

“Majesty, this piece of weaving is very beautiful. Nobody in our family had a pattern this beautiful,” said the Queen to the King.

“Then, who wove this piece and why was it not finished? Why was it abandoned in a hut in the middle of nowhere?” asked the King.

“Father and Mother, why don’t you make a weaving contest so we know the real weaver of this piece.”

“If the weaver is a lassie, I will marry her, and if she turns out to be married, I will take her as sister. What do you think, Father? Mother?” The news about the weaving contest reached the ears of Peria Pokak’s aunts. They wanted to deal themselves into the contest.

The crowd that filled the palace's great hall started to murmur. They tried hard to remember who have yet competed in the weaving competition. Suddenly, the Crown Prince's gaze fell upon the seven aunts of Peria Pokak. He felt that there was something weird. And at that moment, somebody talked to the aunts.

"Have all your siblings tried the contest?" asked the person to the eldest aunt.

"Yes, and everyone failed. Except for our niece. She hasn't tried." The Crown Prince overheard the conversation.

"Summon her anyway! She has to try," said the Crown Prince.

The seven aunts tried so hard to prevent the Crown Prince's intention to no avail as the Crown Prince insisted no matter what. Finally, the envoy of the Prince departed to summon Peria Pokak.

"I don't care if the King summoned me. I can't weave and I don't have any cloth."

The envoy returned to the palace in disappointment. When they arrived at the palace, they informed the Crown Prince of the rejection.

"If she doesn't have any outfit, take this cloth for her outfit!" Datuk Teruna commanded. The envoy returned to Peria Pokak bringing the cloth the Crown Prince had given them. "Why do

you bother to return just to bring me the outfit? The cloth won't do me any good as I have no blouse. Coming with you to the palace without it would give me nothing but shame. It will be impolite. No, Sir, I won't go if I don't have any blouse," said Peria Pokak. Again, the envoy was in disappointment. As they returned to the palace, the Crown Prince asked.

"What did she say?" asked Datuk Teruna.

"My Lord, Peria Pokak does not want to come as she has no blouse, Sire."

"Take this blouse." The envoy returned to Peria Pokak with the blouse she had asked for. But Peria Pokak still refused to come to the palace.

"How am I to come to the palace if I don't have any belt," said Peria. As the envoy returned, they told the Crown Prince Peria's answer.

"If she wants a belt, give her what she asked," said the Crown Prince. The envoy brought a belt to Peria Pokak. As they arrived at Peria Pokak's place, they had to be greeted with another refusal.

"Gentlemen, you brought me a belt, but without a scarf. I won't go anywhere if I have no scarf."

“Peria, you ask too much. I’m under the impression that you’re just making excuses,” said the envoy.

“I am not making excuses, Sir. I’m telling you the truth. I am a nobody. I have no father, and my mother is just a serf. How would I make excuses? I don’t want to be considered impolite,” replied Peria.

“We’ll tell the Crown Prince about this,” said the envoy. The Crown Prince was then informed of Peria’s refusal. Datuk Teruna didn’t say much. He simply ordered someone else to meet Peria Pokak and give her what she asked.

“Bring her the scarf and ask her to come immediately!”

Peria Pokak didn’t just asked those items. She also asked a *gendit* – belt made of gold and silver – an anklet and a pair of bracelet, a comb, a pair of *sunggar* – hair accessory – a carriage, a group of escort consisting one thousand guards surrounding the carriage, and they had to beat gamelan gongs. Shortly, the envoys’ horse came. From a distance, one would be astounded by the trotting sound of the horses of the entourage. Peria Pokak was horrified at the sight of the noble steeds.

She Is Indeed the Weaver

Tonight, the angels were busy. Each angel was doing their own responsibilities seriously. Some were making the flowers, some

others were preparing outfits, while some others were preparing accessories. They all wanted to take part in Peria Pokak's makeover.

"We have to make Peria Pokak as beautiful as possible," said one angel.

"So they'd be surprised to see how dazzling Peria Pokak is," replied another angel.

"Peria, wear this clothing."

"Wow, I can barely believe this. The clothing fits me perfectly," said Peria Pokak as she rubbed the clothing she just fitted into.

"Now, put on all this jewelry."

"You deserve to wear all these jewelry, Peria. We know how good you are. So, you deserve all this." By the break of dawn, the angels had finished doing the makeover for Peria Pokak. She looked stunning. Peria's happiness was ineffable. She really thanked The Almighty for giving her the chance to befriend the seven angels who had helped her this far.

Peria Pokak couldn't wait for the king's envoys. She waited for them as she was clad in the most perfect adornment. The angels had given her a set of clothing with golden embellishment. The glittering accessories heightened the flawlessness of her beauty. The angels had also poured her the fragrance of the fairyland. In

short, Peria was clad and adorned in the most stunning clothing and accessories unmatched by anyone in the whole kingdom that surpassed even the queen's. Peria Pokak didn't wear all the clothing and jewelry she had asked the King and the Crown Prince. She just wanted to test the seriousness of the Crown Prince about inviting her.

The convoy started to advance from Peria Pokak's house. Peria was lifted on a palanquin. At the same time, the gamelan started to be sounded. Finally, the convoy reached the façade of the great hall of the palace. Gamelan was still sounded. The crowd that had been waiting started to be curious about catching a glimpse of Peria Pokak. Peria Pokak was led to the weaving instrument. The crowd wanted to approach. They wanted to see how Peria would finish the weaving. The crowd became impatient in seeing the completion of the weaving that Peria Pokak did. The final touch from Peria's hands made the weaving completed. The King, Queen, and Crown Prince Datuk Teruna was astonished by the completed weaving.

"I'm astounded by the weaving, Peria," said the King.

"I've never seen anything to match this weaving," said the Queen.

"I'm now convinced that you are the weaver of this piece of cloth," said the Crown Prince. Finally, the King announced that he would keep his promise. He would make Peria Pokak the

consort for the Crown Prince. The crowd was happy at hearing that. As soon as she arrived at home, Peria couldn't wait to tell her mother what she had experienced.

“Mother, I'm so delighted that I've finished the weaving. The King wanted to fulfill his promise. He wanted me to be his daughter-in-law.”

“Is that true, Peria?” asked her mother in disbelief.

“That's true, Mother. But I haven't said yes. The King gave me three days to discuss this with you.” The next morning Peria got up very early. She couldn't sleep, she was anxious. On the one hand she's happy for such a great honor. Meanwhile, on the other hand she was worried about her future. She went to the river to calm herself. She was surprised by the coming of the seven angels.

“Peria, what made you uncertain about this?”

“You're right, Angels, I am in confusion.”

“Peria, you don't have to be confused. It's such a great honor. You'll be a queen,” said one of the angels.

“You don't have to be confused, Peria. Take the chance. You deserved all this. You're a good girl, humble, and down-to-earth,” said another angel.

Peria conceded to the advice of the seven angels who had been helping her so far. She was ready to be a crown princess. Peria's mother was very happy about her decision. After all, she's her only child and she never pushed her child to make up her mind to any decision. Now, Peria had made her own decision. She was truly happy. So far, she and her child had been the mockery and insult by the family of her late husband. Peria's aunts had treated them heartlessly. They had always treated Peria like a servant.

"O, Lord The Almighty, thank You. Thank You for defending the weak. You've answered the relentless prayers that I've addressed to You, day and night," said Peria's mother. Tears dripped from the eyes that started to wrinkle. The third day finally came. As promised, it's the day when Peria would give her answer to the King. Peria came with her mother. Her arrival was greeted by the Majesties King and Queen, and the Crown Prince Datuk Teruna.

"So, Peria Pokak, what do you say? Would you accept the Crown Prince Datuk Teruna as your husband?" asked the King.

"We've given this matter a thought and we believe that this whole thing was a gift from The Almighty. For this we would like to apologize, and we would agree to anything Your Majesty wants with us," replied Peria Pokak.

"Thank you, Peria. Indeed, you deserve all this."

“Majesty, there is one request that I would like to make. May I, Majesty?”

“Certainly, Peria, ask away.”

“Forgive me, Majesty. I would be forever grateful if I were allowed to take my mother and my moldy bamboos to the palace.”

“Peria, your mother totally deserves to live in the palace. But what do you want with those moldy bamboos?”

“O, Wise Majesty, the only possessions are my mother and those moldy bamboos. I haven’t anything else. So, if I am to take my mother, those bamboos will have to follow her as well. Or else, Your Majesty will have done us apart, meanwhile we wish not to be apart.”

“Well then, have it your way, Peria. I’ll grant you your wish.” The wedding ceremony of the Crown Prince and Peria Pokak would be celebrated jubilantly and it was carefully prepped. As asked by Peria, the King ordered his guards to bring the moldy bamboos from Peria Pokak’s house.

“Today, I command you all to take all the bamboos from the house of the future Crown Princess.” said one of the guards.

Then, some of their numbers went to Peria’s house to fetch those moldy bamboos.

“I don’t think I can understand why Peria wanted to take these moldy bamboos to the palace. What is she going to do with them?”

“You know, the poor. Even if you give them riches, they’ll keep their trashes,” replied another. After riding for quite some time, the convoy reached Peria’s house. They searched the house for the bamboos Peria had asked. Those bamboos were piled on a *berugag*, a six-column wooden structure. The convoy thought that Peria had gone mad for keeping those moldy bamboos for were as good as trash. Those bamboos couldn’t even make as good fire woods. The bamboos were very dirty and totally unworthy to keep. They came in piles. There were tens of them. As the convoy reached the palace, the bamboos were handed to Peria Pokak. She instructed those men to come forward and rupture those bamboos one at a time.

“Brothers, you’re not done here. You must crack these bamboos open,” said Peria Pokak. When the bamboos were cracked-open the people were stunned that each segment contained one very silky-smooth piece of cloth, and they were glittering under the sunshine. Once again, people were amazed. As bamboos were cracked open, they found more pieces of cloth.

“I’m so amazed, where had Peria gotten those pieces of cloth?” asked a guard.

“It’s so fitting that Peria becomes the Crown Princess for her kindness and modesty,” replied another. Suddenly, their eyes met a piece of cloth that looked exactly like the weaving Peria had completed during the contest.

“My brother, look at this piece!” “What’s so special about it?”

“How could you not see it. This one looked exactly like the weaving completed by Peria.”

“Now I truly am convinced that she had done all these herself” The people who witnessed this grew more amazed. They were baffled as to who Peria Pokak really was. Some of them were even more convinced that the weaving had been Peria’s. The wedding day of Peria and the Crown Prince drew nearer. Signs of the extravagance of the occasion were everywhere. It was now time for the angels to leave Peria Pokak. They now bade Peria farewell.

“Peria, our duty is accomplished. Now, live happily in peace and serenity with Datuk Teruna. You don’t have to live in hardship no more,” said one of the angels.

“I really owe you deep gratitude, O Angels. I never would have made it to the palace if it wasn’t for you angels.”

“Now it’s time for us to return to the fairyland. Remember this, never let vanity and arrogance befall you once you become a queen.”

The long anticipated day finally came. Today was the wedding day of the Crown Prince to Peria Pokak. The people very jubilant. Parties were everywhere. Invitees came to the main event. Kings of neighboring kingdoms were also invited. Commoners had different seatings from the kings. Yet, everybody was given the same chance to congratulate the newlyweds. Peria Pokak looked so marvelous. She wore a very beautiful outfit. It was bejeweled with beautiful beads. Her head was adorned by diamond-studded, pure gold hairpins. The jewelry she was wearing was very expensive. Peria was very stunning since she was indeed beautiful. The same went with the Crown Prince Datuk Teruna. He looked handsome and gorgeous. The outfit he wore was a perfect fit to Peria’s. Everyone was stunned by the perfect couple.

“Peria Pokak is really pretty. The Crown Prince is similarly handsome,” said one of the guests. “They’re really a perfect fit,” replied another.

“They’re made for each other. So everything looks perfect.” Nearly all guests praised the beautiful and handsome couple, except Peria’s seven aunts. They looked nonchalant and unhappy.

Finally, the time came for them to congratulate the newlyweds. They had tried their best to look stunning at the wedding. It was to no avail because once they moved closer to Peria, it was evident that she was way beyond their league.

They were somewhat embarrassed that their outfit weren't as stunning as Peria's. The wedding ceremony was entertained by various kinds of arts of the kingdom. Everyone was well fed as the ceremony took place for seven days and nights. In the days after the wedding, the Crown Prince and Peria Pokak lived in utter happiness. Peria Pokak held no grudge against her seven aunts. She never remembered any wickedness they had done to her. She loved them nonetheless. Peria remained kind and was willing to share her happiness after she became crown princess. Her aunts were ashamed and they felt sorry for what they did to her. They promised themselves to do good to others. Everyone lived happily and peacefully ever after.