

THE ORIGIN OF KOTABARU

Asal Mula Kotabaru

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THE ORIGIN OF KOTABARU

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Asal Mula Kotabaru



CERITA RAKYAT DARI KALIMANTAN SELATAN

Ditulis oleh
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ASAL MULA KOTABARU

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1. KESUSASTERAAN RAKYAT-KALIMANTAN
2. CERITA RAKYAT KALIMANTAN SELATAN

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

All praises be to Allah Swt. because of His grace and blessings, *The Origin of Kotabaru* can be finished in a well-organized manner. I would like to convey my gratitude to Language Development and Cultivation Agency which has facilitated the publication of the story.

The Origin of Kotabaru is a folktale from Kotabaru people located in Pulau Laut District, South Kalimantan. There are several versions about the origin of this Kotabaru, one of them is recorded. In this folk tale there are values can be used as inspiration for the younger generation of this nation, they are; capable of forming harmonious family, mutual support, pray in kindness. and wise leader who responsible for being able to make all people happy.

Starting from the book as a window to the world, let's dominate the world by beginning to open the door of our hearts and minds. Hopefully.

Banjarbaru, April 2016
Author

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THE ORIGIN OF KOTABARU

A Happy Family

Coconut leaves on towering trees lining the shore were swaying in a gentle sea breeze, as if waving at a flock of birds that flew over the ocean back to their nests on the cliff. Slowly but surely, the afternoon sun went down the horizon. The light scattered and tinged the sky orange on that late afternoon. The beautiful sunset only added to the joy of a little girl who was busy chasing after the waves that crashed onto the shore. Running, jumping, and running and jumping again were a great joy for her. The little girl asked her mother to run along, chasing after the rippling waves tirelessly. Every now and then, she pulled her father's hand so he could also take part in the fun.

The little girl's parents could only indulge their only daughter's wish. They also jumped and ran after the rolling waves, picked up sea critters like crabs and small seashells that were washed up on the beach, and put them back into the sea.

"Father, why should we return the crabs and seashells back to the sea? Didn't they swim to the beach by themselves?" the girl asked.

“Those crabs and seashells were accidentally washed up on the shore because of the sea current, Cenning. So we should help them to be together again with their friends,” her father replied as he gently stroked the child’s head.

“Poor them if they got separated from their friends and family, right *Pa*? Cenning would be sad as well, if I got separated from *Mama* and *Bapa*. Cenning doesn’t want that,” said the girl called Cenning softly while holding both her parents’ hands tight. When the father listened to his daughter’s sincere words, he felt pierced to the heart. So far, their efforts in raising her were not in vain. They always tried to instill love and compassion in their daughter, not only to the fellow human beings but also to the animals and plants because they were all God’s creation.

Such love and compassion were not only shown through their treatment towards the child. Long before their little girl was born, when she was still in her mother’s womb they had planned that if the baby was a girl, they would name it I Cenning that meant a beautiful, gentle, loving daughter.

If it was a boy, he will be named Ambo Upe that meant a fortunate son. It turned out that a beautiful, soft-hearted and compassionate daughter had been born according to the wish contained in her name.

All this time they tried to be good role models for Cening. They also catered to their daughter's every wish, as long as it would not bring her harm. To them, worldly possessions were meaningless compared to the happiness of their beloved child. For this reason, they poured all their love, affection, and guidance endlessly to Cening, their little girl, their most beautiful treasure. They believed that good examples and loving guidance that they have shown would become invaluable life assets to their little girl.

Once she was satisfied playing with the waves in that stunning sunset, she fell asleep almost immediately and had a beautiful dream. In her dream, she was freely running after the waves that were lapping on the shore. Every now and then her sleeping face broke into a smile, implying her happiness in the dream world. This was different from her father's, La Ode's grim look.

That night La Ode seemed downcast, as if he was thinking deeply about something. Seeing it, his beloved wife approached him.

"It's all right, Daeng, you don't have to worry about tomorrow. Have faith that the day after tomorrow will remain bright as today," his wife reassured him.

"How can I be calm, Nayang? Tomorrow I will sail away, and no one knows how long it's going to be. I don't know whether I'll be able to get back together again with our family. It's really hard for



me to leave you and our little girl.” La Ode expressed the anxiety he had in his heart.

“Daeng shouldn’t say so, because it will make it difficult for me to let you go. Leave for our sake and have faith that you will be coming back to us. Your faith will strengthen us here and our prayers will bring you back together with us again.” Daeng’s wife continued to encourage her husband.

“Somehow Nayang, I feel that my departure tomorrow morning would not be like the usual....”

“Very well, Daeng, if you couldn’t bear to leave us, then don’t. Stay here. Let your friends be the ones to sail away. Let’s enjoy the misery of life here, in this barren land,” said La Ode’s wife, cutting off her husband’s words.

“All right, Nayang, I will no longer be indecisive and will go. I believe that your and our little girl’s prayers will keep me safe along the way.”

“If so, we should rest immediately because in the next morning you will have to leave to the open sea.”

So, the couple lied down on the bed, flanking their little girl who was sleeping. The whisper of night breeze, crashing waves, and stars that twinkled from behind the hollow wooden walls seemed like a lullaby wishing for the well-being of this small family.

After trying to close his eyes for some time, La Ode finally woke up and sat, looking at his wife and daughter who seemed to sleep soundly and peacefully. Again, the indecision came to his mind. He was wavering between staying in his ancestral land and leaving, especially when he remembered the innocent words of his little girl Cenning this afternoon that gave him a premonition of his long separation with his small family. What he feared the most was to part with them. He was not afraid to fight against the most formidable enemy, even the giants, or to sacrifice his own life in order to keep his family together.

It was this fear that made him hesitant to take a big decision tomorrow morning. He had a feeling that when he left, a big incident would be coming his way. Such an occurrence may separate him from his family forever, so he was more inclined to stay with them. On the contrary, if he were to remain in his native land, their life would stay the same. They would live miserably. If only the misery was his alone, it would be fine. However, his wife, child, and other relatives would also live the same way.

He did not want that to happen, especially to Cenning, his only daughter, his most precious pearl that he treasured even more than his life. Thinking about this made La Ode recalled the reason of his plan to leave.

A Peaceful Country

In the past, his birthplace was a fertile and prosperous land. The kingdom's populace, with its vast territory that covered the middle of the island up to the coastal areas, had lived in peace. All their needs were satisfied.

Lush paddy fields produced rice that could supply the whole country for a year or even more. In fact, vegetables and fruits could grow by themselves. For example, after harvesting cassava, the stems would be casually tossed onto the ground. A few days later, new shoots would appear and quickly developed into lush vegetation. The leaves could be cooked into several vegetable dishes. Three to four months later, the tubers could be harvested and turned into tasty and healthy snacks.

Pumpkin, chili, bitter melon or peria and even cucumber seeds that were scattered around the house could flourish without being planted and tended. And so, they enjoyed the nature's harvests with gratitude. They recognized the abundant blessings that God had bestowed, among other things, food sources that nourished them. Food rich in nutrients can be obtained from plants that grew and bore fruits by themselves. Fertile soil, fresh air, and sufficient rainfall made various types of fruit trees thrive here.

For example, papaya trees, whose fruits can be eaten not only when it was ripe. Young papaya could be cooked into a vegetable

dish. Likewise, the tender leaves could be used in cooking or in traditional herbal remedies such as blood cleansing, blood boosting, and stimulating milk production for nursing mother. Likewise, not only starfruit tasted delicious, it was also effective in treating patients with hypertension or high blood pressure. Mangosteen also had plenty of benefits besides having succulent flesh. The rind, after being dried and boiled, could be used as a cure for various types of diseases. Many more types of plant with beneficial properties were used in the traditional medicines.

People would enjoy what their island had produced throughout the year. After durian and cempedak, a few months later it would be the harvesting seasons for rambutan and mangosteen, followed by mango, kweni, wild mangosteen or cottonfruit, and tamarind-plum and Malay gooseberry. Also various types of plants that bore fruits all year round from starfruit, jackfruit, water apple, guava, rose apple, and papaya to various types of bananas, such as plantain, lady finger, Cavendish, monkey banana, and French plaintain. Nature's offerings did not only come from the land but also by the sea. The islanders got their nutrients from the sea's bounties. A wide range of marine products such as fish, shrimp, shellfish and crabs could be easily obtained. There was no need to sail far into the ocean to get them. They could get more than enough just by spreading fishing nets on the coastline. It was as if the sea creatures offered themselves to the people living on the island.

The same could be said for the dense rainforests that surrounded their kingdom. Even though the tall, towering tress in the forest looked sturdy enough to be used as primary building materials for house construction, they were not cut down carelessly. People only did it when they really needed them. In fact, before cutting down the trees, they would look for the tree's saplings or new seedlings to be planted first. Only when the saplings had grown as tall as an adult male, the tree could be felled. It was done so that when their children and grandchildren grew up and needed the same type of trees to build a house or a bridge, those tree saplings could be cut down readily. It meant the trees that people had planted today could be used by their descendants, just like the trees that they cut down today had also been planted by their ancestor decades ago.

This practice had been passed down since time immemorial. They believed that by perpetuating the practice their forest would be sustained. Mountains and land would not erode and collapse. Water would not cover their land since the roots of massive, sturdy trees would absorb and take up water from the rain. The air would stay cool and fresh in spite of the blazing sun because green vegetation provided shades and sheltered the land. The tranquillity was a proof of harmony between nature and human beings who ruled over the earth.

The islanders had been extremely blessed with all these natural products from the sea and land. Everyone was not lacking anything at the time. They lived in fulfilment and happiness under fair and wise leadership of the king. For them, living under the rule of a just and wise king was like living peacefully in paradise.

There was no dissension between them that could make them fight or hurt others. All problems, no matter how small, could be settled amicably through deliberation so that all parties felt at ease and in peace. Occasionally, if there was a big problem they would refer it to the king to get his wise judgment and decision. Usually, it would be a matter concerning the outsiders. The people of this kingdom did not really like connecting with people from outside the island. However, they established good relations with people of the neighboring kingdom who resided on the same island. They worried that the outsiders would bring bad influence on their peaceful way of living as proven by their calm and tranquil lives so far. Such peace had been continuing for decades and even hundreds of years.

For several hundred years they had been led by just and wise kings. Although previous kings had passed away, their successors still had the same leadership qualities of being fair and wise. Hence, the populace never considered to live their lives outside the island. Even the thought of moving to the neighboring kingdom had never crossed their mind. They were content with

their lives here. Until one day, a calamity struck the whole country.

Losing a Wise King

It all began when the current king died. The king, who was known for his wisdom, fairness and healthy lifestyle, had unexpectedly breathed his last. No one could believe that their king had passed away.

They always prayed for the king's health and well-being. If an enemy was to attack, all of the king's subjects would be ready to shield him and protect his safety. They were willing to sacrifice their body and soul for the king, as a proof of their love for their just and wise leader. During this time the king had never once suffered from a serious illness. Even if he was sick, it was only a minor one due to exhaustion. Furthermore, the king never got sick because he had healthy eating habits like consuming fresh fruits for his meal, and got plenty of rest.

He never slept right after eating because the food would accumulate into fat. That was the reason why a person became overweight. He always exercised enough, at least by strolling around the courtyard every morning. The king always greeted the soldiers who guarded the royal palace ground, ladies-in-waiting and *inang* who came across him. If he had spare time in the evening, the king would venture out of the palace by riding his favorite horse to see the condition of his people. In fact, it was not uncommon for the king to descend from his horse to help someone in distress.

For example, one afternoon the king saw an old man carrying a sack of harvested rice to his house. Immediately, he descended then took the sack away and placed it on the back of his favorite horse. He brought the sack back to the old man's house. Despite the old man's firm refusal, the king still did it anyway. For him, if his subjects suffered, he should be the first person to feel the pain.

On the other hand, if his subjects were happy, he would be the last person deserving such happiness. His people really loved his leadership. Not once it occurred in their minds that one day they would be losing their king. Therefore, when the people heard the announcement about the king's death, the whole country was thrown into great commotion.



Sadness swept across the nation. For seven days and seven nights the sky turned gray. The sun was reluctant to share its warmth. Leaves would wither. Birds were whispering their grief. Sea breeze lightly wafted, causing small ripples in the sea. The fish offered themselves on the beach so that people did not have to sail the sea.

The kingdom was like a dead and empty city, silent and still. Everyone was in low spirits. In fact, they only ate and slept because they had to stay healthy, as what their beloved king had taught them to.

Sorrow that enshrouded the kingdom began to abate with the ascension of the crown prince to the throne. They really hoped that the young king could lead the nation with his sensibility and wisdom, like his predecessors. Gradually, their spirit rekindled. Activity began to return to normal.

A year went by. One time, *hulubalang*, the commander of coast guard garrison rushed into the palace. After requesting permission with the captain of the royal guard to have an audience with the king, he entered the palace.

“Your Majesty, pardon this servant. I’d like to report a situation in our territorial sea,” said *hulubalang*, prostrating before the king.

“What is it, *Hulubalang*? Just report the situation in your area!” the king said curiously.

“Pardon, Your Majesty, today during guard rotation on the beach, we saw a large foreign ship entering our territory. The ship threw anchor and docked ashore,” reported the *hulubalang*.

“Then, what about the state of the ship and its passengers, are they safe?” asked the king.

“Your Majesty, the ship ran aground and brought down many troops on the beach. They planned to intrude upon our land,” the *hulubalang* explained, because the king thought that the foreign ship was stranded on his land.

“What is the purpose of their coming to our land by carrying a lot of troops?” the king inquired with suspicion.

“Your Majesty, your servant has proposed the same question about the purpose of their arrival in our kingdom. The leader of their army said that he wanted to have an audience with the King. That was the reason as to why your servant came here to report this.” *Hulubalang* tried to explain.

“If Your Majesty is willing to accept them, we shall allow their presence here. However, if Your Majesty is declining their request, they will be expelled immediately.

Currently our troops are holding them back on the beach, so they cannot go deeper into our land,” *hulubalang* added.

The king thought for a moment. Then he ordered his ministers and counselors to gather in a closed hall. Once everyone was present, the king explained the arrival of the foreign vessel and asked their opinions.

“You have heard my explanation. Now I ask your opinions on this. Do we need to receive the envoy of that distant country here or we reject it immediately? Even though I’m the king of this land, when it came to deciding



on a major issue concerning the state of the kingdom, I have to ask the opinions of the ministers and counselors,” said the king.

“As was the custom of our forefathers, we should not accept them here, Your Majesty. Your servant is worried that their arrival may affect our lives.” The first opinion came from the Minister of Rites.

There was a pause.

“Your Majesty, this lowly one agreed with that opinion, because if we break the tradition of our ancestor by accepting the outsiders, the life of the people in this land will be affected. Your servant’s concern is that their arrival here was actually to seize control over our country’s natural resources. We beg your pardon if this opinion could not satisfy Your Majesty,” the minister in charge of the country’s natural resources expressed his thought as he bowed before the king.

It was quiet again. “What about the thoughts of the other ministers?” the king asked as he stared at the minister of defense.

For a moment, there was silence. The ministers attempted to give sensible opinions with a number of considerations for it concerned the lives of the whole nation.

“Your servant thinks that the opinions of the previous two ministers have their merits. However, this servant believes that

time has passed and a new era has begun. Please forgive this servant if Your Majesty finds my opinion to be erroneous and disagreeable. Your servant believes that perhaps it is time for us to start opening ourselves to the outside world.

Perhaps, after establishing a good relationship with them, we can improve the rate of survivability of this country.” The minister in charge of the country’s defense expressed his opinion as he bowed before the king.

He was so anxious that his opinion might not be pleasing to the king, and made him angry instead. Furthermore, his opinion was clearly contrary to the ancient tradition that had been upheld since time immemorial. From the beginning until now, no one ever had the intention and courage to break it, let alone oppose it in the presence of the king. So when he expressed his thoughts, there was a tremor in his voice that betrayed his pounding heart, when he tried to suppress his deep fear.

“What do you mean by saying that after having a good relationship with them, we can improve the country’s survivability?” the king asked in bewilderment as he never heard such an opinion before.

“Your Majesty, this lowly one begs Your Majesty’s lenience if I have been presumptuous by expressing an opinion that is a taboo in our community.” The minister spoke again quietly, almost

inaudibly. He became increasingly afraid that he had incited the king's anger.

“It is all right. Everyone may propose their opinions and considerations, so long as it can be accounted for. That was why I summon all of you here,” said the king.

“Now, elaborate your opinion and the reason for that,” the king continued.

“Pardon, Your Majesty. What your servant meant by having a good relationship with the outsiders is to benefit from it,” said the minister.

“I still don't understand what you mean,” said the king.

“Pardon, Your Majesty. For example, in terms of defense, until now our equipment and weaponry are still made from old iron scraps. Later on, we might be able to revitalize our weapons with the new iron,” the minister said.

“How can it be done, Minister?” The king asked again.

“We can start negotiation with them to exchange our crops with their irons to improve and strengthen our weaponry. The same method can be applied in the other fields too. For example, we can barter our crops with clothing materials.

Thus, we can exploit this relationship for the protection and convenience of our people.” The minister explained the reasoning behind his opinion. The king nodded, tried to absorb what the defense minister had just said. “It seems that what you have said can be taken into consideration. How do all of you think about this?” The king asked for the opinion of his ministers once more.

“This lowly one begs for Your Majesty’s leniency if my opinion is not pleasing to Your Majesty’s heart. All this time we can meet the needs of our people without having to establish a relationship with the people outside the island. We can buy everything we need from the neighboring kingdom, so up to this day your servant still thinks that we do not need to deal with them directly. Once again, pardon the opinion of this servant.” The minister in charge of trade also expressed his thoughts.

“It’s correct, Your Majesty. This servant also disagrees if we had to deal directly with them. This servant is afraid that if we break our ancestral tradition, a plague or disaster will befall us. For whatever reason, we must keep and respect the rules set by our ancestor. Do forgive your servant if this opinion is not pleasing to Your Majesty’s heart. This lowly one only considers this for the sake of our people’s peace.” The minister of rites reaffirmed his previous statement.

For the first time, the minister of agriculture expressed his view before the king and court officials alike.

“Pardon this servant, Your Majesty. By your leave, your servant believes that it is better for us to stop the invader’s troops from advancing into the palace. It’s bad enough for them to set their foot into our kingdom’s coastal territory. Please do not allow them to set foot at the palace where Your Majesty and the royal family resided. This servant is afraid that if it is allowed, the safety of our country, particularly Your Majesty’s family will be at risk. Again, this servant begs for lenience if this servant’s opinion is not pleasing to Your Majesty’s heart,” the minister said.

“What do you mean by saying that the safety of the royal family is at risk? What does it have to do with it? Don’t they just visit? I do not understand what you mean, Minister of Agriculture!” this time the king’s voice rose slightly.

A moment of silence returned. At once, the ministers’ heart pounded faster. The king’s voice was reverberated in everyone’s ears, something that had never happened before.

“Thank you, Your Majesty. No, your servant has no intention to alarm Your Majesty about the royal family. This lowly one is just worried about the safety of the royal family. This is merely proof of your servant’s devotion for Your Majesty’s family.”

For a moment the minister sighed as he tried to calm his rapidly racing heartbeat. Fear was clearly displayed on his face.

“This lowly one is worried that if the troops from outside the island enters the palace and have a chance to stay here, they may become hostile towards the royal family. This may put the royal family’s safety at risk. This is what your servant deliberated, Your Majesty.”

After explaining the meaning of his words earlier, relief was shown in the minister’s face as he took a long deep breath.

“I think your concern is too much. Even though our ancestor has been forbidding any contact with the outsiders, we should not be too prejudiced against strangers. It can make us ignorant of the world out there.”

A tense silence ensued after the king had spoken. Everyone present in the room never thought that such words would come out of the king’s mouth. The palpitating heart of everyone who listened to the speech became increasingly audible in their ears. Everyone was busy with their own thoughts. Apprehension was on the face of everyone present.

“Then, how do you think, Prime Minister?” Suddenly the king broke the silence.

The prime minister was a chief minister or leader of the kingdom’s ministers. His duty was to deliver the king’s decrees or edicts to his ministers and the people. Similarly, when the people raised their complaints or wishes to the king, it was the prime

minister who would convey it to the king, so his view was often representing the people's opinion. Therefore, the prime minister's words usually carried considerable weight before the king. Someone who is chosen to be prime minister must be wise and sensible.

“Thank you, Your Majesty. If it is considered as this servant's personal view and is unpleasant to Your Majesty, please disregard it. However, if Your Majesty deemed it opinion of the people, please try to understand it.”

Silence returned. All who were present could not wait listening to the full opinion of the person that they held in high regards after the king.

“What Your Majesty said about how we should not be prejudiced against others before we're on familiar terms with them is true. However, Your Majesty should also think of our ancestral tradition. For centuries, our ancestor has established the supreme rule of this kingdom, which is not to accept any outsiders who wish to enter our kingdom. All this time, we have maintained the rule earnestly. It has never crossed our mind to break it.” The prime minister sighed for a moment.

“As a result, until now we've never lacked in anything or left behind by the neighboring kingdom. We can be self-sufficient. All the information about the world out there has also been

obtained. Again, everything was achieved without having to communicate directly or to welcome them in our territory. Suffice to say that we can get all of those just by dealing with the neighboring kingdom. If we violated the tradition, I'm worried that a calamity will strike our country. The room was silent again.

“This old one is not worried about oneself, but if it happens, our descendants and future generations will be the ones to suffer the most. Your servant truly hopes that no disaster will strike our prosperous country, Your Majesty. Again, this is merely this lowly servant's personal opinion, it may be overlooked. However, if Your Majesty considered it to represent the people's view, please understand it. That is all, Your Majesty.”

They were gripped by the silence. It was time for the king to make a decision. This was the first time he decided a big problem that concerned the life of the whole country, not only its people, but also the survival of his kingdom and surrounding nature. The silence was broken a while later.

“All right, now I shall decide on this case. I will pass a judgment that had never been made by our previous kings. Nevertheless, I hope it can broaden our horizon about the world out there.” The king's opening speech made the ministers and counselors tensed.

“I will allow them to meet me. I want to know the purpose of their arrival. If it can benefit my people, I will sanction their

presence. On the contrary, if their arrival does not benefit us in any way, I will not hesitate to drive them out of my country!” the king continued. No one dared to open his mouth to protest.

“Hulubalang!”

“Here, Your Majesty.” *Hulubalang* who had been waiting in front of the court hall immediately approached the king.

“Let them see me. I want to find out about the purpose of their arrival in our country,” said the king, causing everyone to feel even more anxious.

The ministers and counselors felt uneasy about the meeting as it was the first time to happen in the history of their kingdom.

The Arrival of Invaders

Some time passed. Then, a steady sound of marching troops was heard. The atmosphere grew tense. The sound of their steps got closer until it stopped right before the palace gate. *Hulubalang* who had been guarding the palace gate made a report to the king that the guests had arrived. After the king gave his leave, three representatives of the troops came, including their leader. Negotiations followed. In the exchange, the guests expressed their intention to establish a relationship between the kingdoms. They wanted to buy all of the island's produce. In return, they were willing to bring in the commodities from outside the island that were not available in this country. As the king hoped, the negotiation went well and satisfied him. Finally, both parties reached an agreement.

A new era in the history had begun. It was unprecedented. The king had done what was considered to be his ancestor's greatest taboo. The whole country was enshrouded in great trepidation. They were worried that due to this event, a plague or disaster may strike them. Feeling of apprehension rose up. However, they could do nothing and could only resign to fate. They fervently hoped and prayed that the things they were most afraid of would never come. Time went by but the agreement was never broken. At first, the outlanders only purchased agricultural products such as spices, like nutmeg, clove flower, and cinnamon bark. Soon,



they also purchased coffee beans and rattan plants that climbed on large trees. At first, they bought all the crops at an expensive price. Then, they gradually lowered the price. Over time, they no longer bought the crops but took them by force. It was what the people had worried about when the agreement was first made. The king had betrayed their ancestral taboo. Now, the king also got betrayed by his foreign friends. However, he was oblivious to the duplicity. These outlanders always fulfilled the needs of the king and the royal family, but it did not extend to the needs of the people. The invaders even snatched their livelihood and had virtually occupied the country.

The island natives became poor and miserable. They were forced to work in the rice fields and plantations, the best yields had to be given to the outsiders. Only by eating unsellable crops could they sustain their lives. The same thing also happened with the rainforest that was originally lush and green. The natives had preserved the forest they inherited from their ancestors for hundreds of years. In the past, before cutting down large trees, they had to plant trees of the same kind so that the species will be conserved for future generations. Now, they could no longer see massive trees and even medium-sized trees in the forest after they were felled and transported to the invaders' land. The only thing remained was a bunch of weeds.

Not only the island natives forced into a life of destitution and misery, the wildlife and ecosystem also suffered as a result. The rainforest that provided shelters and sources of food for the animals had been fully exploited by the invaders. As a result, countless animals died.

It was the same case with the land. Roots of large trees that previously had been able to take up rainwater were now gone. As a result, soil on the hills was eroded by water and avalanches. Flood often hit their country, inundating their farmlands and causing failed harvests. A disaster had struck the whole country. The people suffered greatly, but the king did not know about it. The king never ventured out of the palace to see his people again.

People had lost their formerly wise king and gradually began to leave. They tried to have a better life in the other countries.

Some people had moved to the neighboring kingdom that was located on the same island. However, many of them attempted to go to the other countries by sailing for days, even weeks and months. That's what happened to the La Ode's family. With a heavy heart, he accepted the invitation of his friends to go to the country beyond the sea. He never sailed that far and wide before. The longest time he ever had to sail was when he went fishing for one day and one night in the middle of the sea. The rest of the time, he preferred to stay in the village with his beloved family.

At first, his attachment to his family made him refuse his friends' invitation. However, his wife and relatives supported it. They were hoping for a better life of freedom in the new country. Once succeeded, La Ode and his friends would be able to return and bring their respective families to a new land of hope.

The sound of waves crashing on the rocks near his home woke La Ode from his reverie. Abruptly, memories of his country from distant past until now dispersed. He realized that a new chapter in his life would begin tomorrow. He and his friends planned to start sailing in the early morning. Realizing that, La Ode lied down besides his cherished daughter. For a moment, he stared at the gentle visage of his little girl. Then, he kissed her forehead. He closed his eyes as he prayed for their family's well-being.

The Inevitable Separation

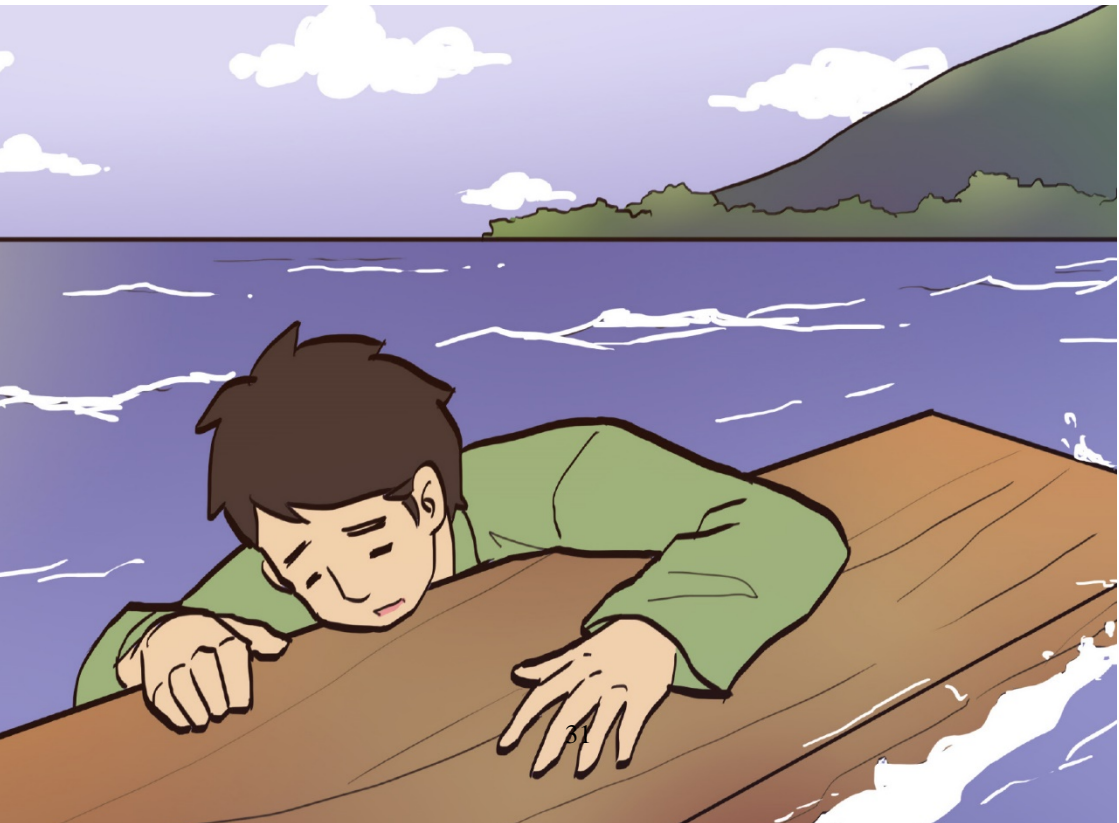
On the next day, the bright morning could not even lighten the mood of the people who lived in a house by the sea. They parted in tears because they did not know when they would be able to meet again. The little girl who kept waving her hands grew smaller and smaller, until she was no longer visible from the ship that was leaving the island. La Ode's journey to look for a better life across the open sea had begun.

Without realizing it, days turned into weeks. They continued to sail across the oceans but there was no land in sight. Until one day, on a pitch black night a ferocious storm tore their ship's sails. The captain could not control the rudder and steered the ship. Soon, a terrifying rumble was heard. The ship broke apart in the dark. The whole crew fell into the open sea. They had no time to think about other people. Surviving was the only thought they had on their minds that time. It was no exception for La Ode.

La Ode was drifting in the ocean in the dark of night. He could not see a thing. Occasionally, lightning flashed through the storm. La Ode tried to survive in the cold sea. He kept treading water to stay afloat and was not willing to give up on his situation. Instantly, another flash of lightning came.

As he reached out his hand to a plank that was vaguely visible before him, La Ode continued to pray to the Creator so that he could return to his family. He held on to the wooden plank all night long until he lost consciousness. That night, he was tossed about by the waves and washed ashore.

When he woke up, he found himself lying on the sand under the morning sun. He slowly opened his eyes, and was very surprised seeing a giant stood over him. He had not made a sound yet when the giant suddenly slung his weak and powerless body over its shoulder and left. Then,



La Ode was thrown on the ground at the place where the giants on the island had gathered. The giants looked fierce. They surrounded La Ode as if they wanted to judge him. La Ode was surprised. He did not understand what he had done wrong.

He stood up slowly, lifted his face and gazed sharply at these giants, trying to clarify what his mistake was.

“What is this? Where am I? Where’s my other companion?” La Ode could not hold back his confusion.

“Why do you ask, you’ve broken the rules in our island!” replied one of the giants.

“Let’s just punish him now!” said another giant.

“You shouldn’t be on this island! You deserve a severe punishment!” another added.

“That’s why we’ll ask the king to punish you harshly!” said another.

“What rules have I broken? I also didn’t want to be stranded on this island. I wish to meet my companions and return to my family.” La Ode tried to defend himself.

“No! This island should not be visible to the human eye, but you actually come here. For that you must be punished!” another giant insisted.



“Yes, it’s fitting that we punish him because he has broken our rules!” another giant shouted at La Ode.

“Well, even though I do not want it, I can accept your punishment but on one condition.” La Ode tried to bargain.

“Hey, human! How dare you! You have violated our rules, but you still have the audacity to give us a condition!” said the first giant.

“What’s the condition?” a giant who had only been listening to their argument said it, and no one dared to refute. Apparently he was the king of the giants.

Realizing it, La Ode immediately replied, “One of you and I shall race to the mountain ahead. If he arrives first, you can punish me. However, if I come first, you must leave this island.” “Very well, you will race against me to that mountain,” the king replied.

“Your Majesty, just let this servant race with the human instead. This lowly one believed that my strength was already enough to defeat him. It’s not appropriate for the king of the giants to fight against this puny human,” a giant with a scary face cut in.

“By Your Majesty’s leave, let your servant races against this man,” said another giant with hairs covering its whole body.

“No. You don’t have to race against him. All this time, no human could ever see our island. Apparently this man is able to see it,

including us, the inhabitants of this island. I believe that only I could defeat him. So, all of you should move back. Let me be the one to race against him!” The king of the giants still insisted to compete with La Ode. None of the giants dared refuting the king’s words. So they began preparing for the race. The course of the race had been set. The starting line would be on the spot where they had gathered and the finish line would be the top of the mountain, which was marked by a tall and shady tree. All the giants on the island witnessed the thrilling race. All of them hoped that the king will win, because if their king lost it would be the same as defeating all giants on this island. They would have to disappear from the island forever and it was final, because breaking a promise was a taboo for them.

Fighting the Giant for the Sake of the Family

On the starting line, La Ode and the king readied themselves. Then, the race began. La Ode ran nimbly across a meadow and slipped under shady trees. He ran tirelessly. He did not look at the obstacles. He could only see his wife's smile and beautiful face of Cening, his little girl at the top of the mountain. He was confident that his small family was expecting his return and continued to pray for his safety. La Ode only thought about their happiness and joy together. Without realizing it, he almost reached the top. He did not feel the slippery rocks that he stepped upon and thorns that scratched his skin anymore. Finally, gasping for breath, La Ode arrived at the top of the mountain. There, he did not find the king of the giants. Looking around the mountain, he found that the king was still stumbling among the trees at the foot of the mountain. After waiting for some time, the king eventually reached the top of the mountain as witnessed by the giants down the mountain.

Panting hard, the king of the giants sat down in exhaustion. Sweat trickled down his body. A look of resignation was in his red eyes. His face did not show anger anymore, just hopelessness. He accepted his defeat with the consequence that they must disappear from the island. Keeping their promise, the giants vanished in the blink of an eye.

They left the beautiful island with its green forest and mountain range which was like towering pillars in the sky. However, before disappearing from La Ode's sight, the king of the giants gave its advice.

“I just have one message to you, human. Take a good advantage of all the natural resources on the island. You and your people can take anything from here, but one thing to remember. You should not be greedy and take everything excessively and waste them. You should cut down the trees only when it is necessary and replace them with new trees. In fact, you can also mine coal and other natural resources from the earth, but don't overdo it. If you fail to carry out my message, only destruction and desolation awaits your children and grandchildren. Always remember my message and pass it on to your descendants.”

La Ode promised that he would always remember the message of the king of the giants by heart and pass it on to his descendants and their future generations. He also did not want to repeat the same suffering of his people, which was caused by the greed of the outsiders and their king. Time passed and seasons changed. La Ode began living his solitary life on the new island. The rich nature provided everything he need. He used the tools left by the giants to cut down big trees and make a house and furniture. He maintained the rainforest around his home that was full of fruit trees and turned the forest into a well-arranged and beautiful

garden. Happy smile was often seen in La Ode's face. He could imagine how his wife would pick fruits and vegetables in the garden.

The fruits and vegetables would then be cooked and enjoyed by the whole family. In that beautiful garden, Cening his little princess would be running merrily, chasing after butterflies and dragonflies. Every now and then, he and his wife would join in, even if they did not actually do it and just played a game of chase. Ah, how wonderful it would be. It made La Ode very enthusiastic to turn the forest into a small, beautiful and quiet village. Not only that, coupled with his passion and intelligence, La Ode was slowly building a big ship that could take him back home.

Months turned into years. He had been living alone on the island for more than thirty full moons. At the time, his only true friend was his own spirit and the hope to be reunited with his small family again. Until sometimes later...

“Ah, my hopes and sacrifices all this time had not been in vain.”
La Ode breathed a sigh of relief, full of satisfaction.

He directed his gaze at a large, sturdy ship before him. The ship was the fruit of his labours for over thirty full moons. He called it the Ship of Hope because it contained his wish when he made it. He built the ship on the beach where he was first stranded on the island. At the time of high tide, he pulled the ship slowly into the

ocean. Sometime later the ship was finally above the open sea. He spread the sails and set the course to his homeland, where his dream was.

Reunited with His Loved Ones

Several months later La Ode finally arrived at his island and was greeted by his family and close relatives. He could not see any positive change in his village. Their island was still hit by drought. Famine and desolation grew, while the king was powerless in the presence of the outsiders. In fact, the royal family had been scattered outside the palace. They became more oppressive, ruling over the palace and the whole country. There was no peace to be had in this country. Watching this made La Ode feel less and less at home.

Without having to wait for a long time and with the addition of several other large ships, he brought his entire family and relatives to the new island, the island of hope.

After sailing the open seas for months, they arrived on the island. They built several new homes together. They opened up farmland and processed their catch from the sea. They were determined to settle on the island, to develop and maintain it until they could live in happiness there.

The new island contains rich natural resources and was called *Pulau Laut*, which meant an island in the middle of the sea. The village that became their dwelling place was named *Kotabaru*, meaning a new city.



The island is located in the Regency of Pulau Laut, outside of South Kalimantan Province, bordering with South Sulawesi Province and West Sulawesi Province. La Ode family, who came from the Island of Sulawesi, was said to be the first family that settled on the island.

Even now the island is still rich in coal and other natural resources. People say that Mount Jambangan in the Lontar Region of Pulau Laut Regency is the palace of the king of the giants who first inhabited the island. The locals today still believe that a genie king who is invisible to ordinary people dwells in that place. Sometimes, certain people can see creatures with different shapes. They believe that these creatures will not bother humans if they are left alone.

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