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Language Development and Cultivation Agency
Ministry of Education and Culture



Reading materials for students in
4th, 5th, and 6th grades
of primary school or children of that age

AJI BATARA AGUNG DEWASAKTI

A FOLKTALE FROM EAST KALIMANTAN

WRITTEN BY:
DWI ANTARI



Language Development and Cultivation Agency
Ministry of Education and Culture

AJI BATARA AGUNG
Aji Batara Agung

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**Language Development and Cultivation Agency
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AJI BATARA AGUNG

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CERITA DARI KALIMANTAN TIMUR

AJI BATARA AGUNG DEWA SAKTI



Ditulis oleh
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AJI BATARA AGUNG DEWA SAKTI

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1. KESUSASTRAAN RAKYAT-KALIMANTAN
2. CERITA RAKYAT-KAIMANTAN TIMUR

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

The author's desire to compile the book of Kutai Folk Story entitled *Aji Batara Agung Dewa Sakti* has emerged since conducting researches on literature in East Kalimantan and North Kalimantan. The folktale can be classified into legend originating from the *Chronicle of the Kingdom of Kutai Kartanegara*. *Aji Batara Agung Dewa Sakti* is a human figure of God incarnation. The cultural values contained in folklore are seen at the *Erau* ceremony which is held annually by the Kutai Kartanegara Regional Government as a symbol of the glory of Kutai Kartanegara. The same is true for Putri Karang Melenu. The princess suddenly appeared from the bottom of the Mahakam River which was honored by Lembuswana. Then, the princess married King *Aji Batara Agung Dewa Sakti*. From his marriage to the princess, the successors to the dynasty of the kings of Kutai Kartanegara were born.

In line with that, the East Kalimantan Language Office as the representative of the Language Development and Cultivation Agency seeks to improve the quality of language and literature services to the community in the form of inventory and documentation of folklore in East Kalimantan and North Kalimantan as an effort to increase reading interest towards cultural literacy change from oral culture to the literacy culture. In addition, folktale writing is also intended to stimulate research

enthusiasm for researchers in the East Kalimantan Language Office.

Finally, the author expresses his sincere thanks to the Head of the East Kalimantan Language Office and to the Language Development and Cultivation Agency who have published this Kutai folklore book. The author hopes that this book will be useful for fostering and developing Indonesian and regional linguistics and literature, especially for literary enthusiasts in Indonesian society in general, especially the people of East Kalimantan and North Kalimantan in order to treat literacy culture as a feature of modern and dignified civilization.

Samarinda, April 2016

Yudianti Herawati

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AJI BATARA AGUNG

The Birth of Aji Batara Agung Dewa Sakti

It was said that in Kutai region, more precisely in Jaitan Layar Hamlet, all people lived happily. They were content with their crops' yield. However, the Chief of Jaitan Layar Village felt sad. He was blessed with power, honor, and more than enough wealth. Unfortunately, there was nothing but silence in his home. It had been decades since a baby's cry was heard there. Not a single child. The older he got, the sadder he became. The pair of husband and wife dearly longed for a child to be cherished, to continue their lineage.

The chief brooded often. In silence, he said to himself time after time, "I have aged. But, I had no child to speak to. I raised my prayers relentlessly. Countless healers and shamans have I met, asked for advice and guidance. Alas, it was my poor luck. I know that my wife must be disheartened, much more than I did. She must have felt guilty for not being able to give birth. However, what else can I say? Whether to have a child or not, it will be God to decide." These words kept reappearing in his heart. Especially when he was wide awake at night. The question also appeared when he was resting from working on the field. That question kept running through his mind, "Lord, will I ever be blessed with a child?" Ofttimes, when that question arose, his tears fell.

That night was not like the other nights. Suddenly the Chief of Jaitan Layar was startled by a deep, rumbling sound outside. He and his wife woke up. He saw the situation outside his house. The sky and earth seemed cloudless and bright. But, that terrifying rumble was still heard. His wife was more scared. Her body shook. She pulled her husband's hands to get him into the house. They hurriedly locked the door. Curious, the Chief of Jaitan Layar anticipated something to happen. He carefully eavesdropped. From the outside, there came a strange voice. It was loud and chilling. "*Sambut mati babu, tiada sambut mati mama.*" Thrice, these words were said. The Chief was puzzled as he listened to the words. He did not know what they meant.

Following a short pause, the chief and his wife looked at each other. The Chief answered from inside his home. He was not loud. But, it could be heard on the outside. He stammered, haltingly said, "*Ulur mati lumus, tiada ulur mati lumus.*"

After the Chief of Jaitan Layar uttered those words, unexpectedly, from the outside he could hear a voice laughing out loud, as though excited because he had answered back. Not long after, all of a sudden the atmosphere surrounding the Chief of Jaitan Layar's home turned calm. The night suddenly turned bright and the moon shone full and clear. After a moment of silence, the Chief of Jaitan Layar took his wife out of the house. Both were looking to their right and left.

He said, “Wife, it was so strange. Now, everything looks bright. But, where did the voice go?” His wife was quiet, not saying a word. She gazed at the corner of the yard. The Chief of Jaitan Layar was also looking in the same direction. In the corner, he saw a big rock. “Look at that! Seems like a big rock has fallen down here,” he said to his wife. Without taking their eyes off it, they came near the big rock. How surprised they were when learning that apparently, it was not a rock. It was *raga mas* – an exceptionally beautiful golden orb. “Oh Dear, this is not a rock. It was a beautifully carved *raga mas*. This must be a sign of something for us,” said the wife.

The Chief of Jaitan Layar answered, “Indeed, I wonder what is inside the orb. I want to open it. The wrapping cloth also looked very fine,” he said. Full of anticipation and burning conviction that the golden orb contained something precious, the husband and wife opened it. How surprised and amazed they were when seeing a little baby inside, wrapped in a golden swathe of material. “Wife, see, a little baby. Both of its hands are holding something,” said the Chief of Jaitan Layar to his wife. She was silent, taken aback. But, she did not dare to touch the baby yet. “True, its right hand is holding an egg, and its left hand a *kris*. It is definitely not an ordinary baby,” she said to her husband. Without waiting for his reply, she picked the baby up and held it with great affection. Not long after, an invincible voice was heard

from the heavens above. The couple sat down as they bowed their heads.

After a moment of silence, a voice was heard talking with the Chief of Jaitan Layar and his wife. It said, “Chief of Jaitan Layar, may you be blessed with happiness. Your prayers and wishes to have a child have been granted by Almighty God. Now, you have been given a healthy child. Raise it well even though it did not come from your wife’s belly. Never treat the baby roughly. Raise the baby carefully.”

Upon hearing the message, the Chief of Jaitan Layar and his wife sat down and nodded, confirming that they will carry out the words said by the invincible voice.

After that, the voice was heard again saying this message. “Chief of Jaitan Layar, please remember and do not forget. You must not place the baby on a mat, let alone on the floor. For forty days you must place the baby on your lap. You can take turns with your relatives. But you have to remember it!” Both husband and wife did not say a word and just nodded.

The couple sat still. Then, the invincible voice sent another message, “Chief of Jaitan Layar, I leave this message unto you. Do not forget. You must not bathe the baby in plain water but with flower water. Then, in the future when this child starts to crawl or walk, do not forget that its feet must not touch or step on



the ground. It could not touch soil before *erau* ritual is held. During the ceremony, place this child's feet on the head of a number of people, both dead and alive. Also, do not forget to touch its feet on a buffalo's head, both dead and alive. Remember it."

The Chief of Jaitan Layar and his wife got increasingly anxious. He still waited for other messages that he would be receiving. Not long after, the voice returned. The message was brief and concise, not difficult as the Chief of Jaitan Layar and his wife had assumed. It said, "One day, when this child finally bathes in the river or on the edge of the river, do not forget to hold an *erau* ritual. Do the ground trodding ceremony as is commonly done by the people of this village! These are my messages. Do not forget. Both of you shall raise this child to adulthood. I wish that both of you be granted with health and longevity."

After that, the voice vanished without a trace. They still sat and bowed there. The Chief of Jaitan Layar's wife could not stop herself from looking at the baby's face. After being held safely in the arms of the Chief of Jaitan Layar's wife, the baby cried. Usually a baby will cry when it got thirsty. She was sad. She realized that she could not feed the baby. She could not bear listening to the baby's cry that grew louder. She said to her husband, "Husband, it is asking for milk. It would be impossible

to get it from an old woman like me. What to do? Poor child, it could not stop crying.”

Looking at his wife’s worried expression, the Chief of Jaitan Layar was quiet and then prayed. He sprinkled yellow rice on his yard. Something magical happened. When he prayed, he heard the invincible voice from the heavens. It was also clearly heard by his wife. “Chief of Jaitan Layar’s wife, listened, you shall feed the baby. Do it immediately!”

The Chief rushed into his home. He asked his wife to nurse the baby together with his prayers. She obeyed her husband’s order. After feeding, the baby finally calmed down and fell asleep. This time the baby was held by the Chief of Jaitan Layar. His wife walked to the well to prepare a meal for her husband.

Since that day, the Chief of Jaitan Layar’s house was never empty. Many neighbors came to visit. They told news of the Chief of Jaitan who had obtained a handsome baby. News of this miracle baby at the Chief of Jaitan Layar’s home was spread all over the land. After forty days holding the baby in their lap alternately, a miracle occurred. The egg that was originally held by the baby hatched into a male chick. Its squawks were loud and raucous. He was sure that it was not an ordinary rooster. Likewise, the baby grew with a splendid physique and handsome build.

One day, while the Chief of Jaitan Layar and his wife were sleeping, they heard a voice from the heavens. It was the invincible voice. That night, the baby was not yet named. The voice said, “Chief, your baby has grown hale and healthy. Name him *Aji Batara Agung Dewa Sakti* immediately. It’s a good name that will suit your child’s character later. Do not forget and do not tarry!”

They were jolted awake. That morning, the Chief of Jaitan Layar told several people to cook and prepare everything else. He will name his son and announce it to the people of Jaitan Layar. After everything was ready, the Chief of Jaitan Layar started to greet the incoming guests. His wife sat next to him, holding the child in her lap. Everyone was gazing at the baby.

“My kinfolks, the people of Jaitan Layar, I heard the invincible voice last night. My wife also heard it too. I was ordered to name my son immediately. And so, I invited you to come here. You should know that the invincible voice asked me to name my son *Aji Batara Agung Dewa Sakti*. Now, you shall bear witness that my child will be named *Aji Batara Agung Dewa Sakti*. Hopefully, the meaning of this child’s name someday will be the embodiment of his self.” His speech was lauded by all who came. They cheered the naming of the Chief’s son.

The Chief of Jaitan Layar resumed his speech, “Now, please enjoy the meal being served. Let my son’s name be known to all.” Everyone welcomed the Chief’s message.

The party was held for forty days and forty nights. It was lively in Jaitan Layar Village. The guests from the neighboring villages were flooding in.

The Chief still remembered the words he received from the invincible voice to place the infant's feet on a human's and buffalo's head. The Chief of Jaitan had prepared a whole head of buffalos and pigs in a myriad of ways. These heads were wrapped with golden fabrics. Aji's hand touched these wrapped heads.

It was a lively celebration. The Chief also gave food and coins to everyone who came. Nearing the end of the celebration, Aji Batara Agung was enveloped in a yellow golden fabric and paraded together to the river bank to be bathed. Before bathing, according to the tradition the infant's feet should step on a piece of rock and iron. And so, the baby was bathed on the river bank. Soon, everyone who came along also bathed in the river. Children, men and women, young and old, all bathed together.

The bathing ritual was over. Reassured, the Chief of Jaitan Layar and his wife brought their son back home and dressed him in traditional clothing. A nice, airy mattress was laid out. The infant was placed on a bed with lovely ornaments. On that day, the tooth filing ritual was held. The Chief of Jaitan Layar wanted Aji to have straight teeth. After tooth filing, the infant was taught to chew betel leaf and areca nut, which was then followed by all guests. They chewed the leaves and nuts, men and women alike.



Outside, the party was still going lively. Various stage arts were performed. There was dancing of all kinds. Everyone enjoyed the food being served. They also took delight in the entertainments provided for days on end. The celebration was finally over. The gallery was dismantled and hundreds of stalls were torn down. The celebration concluded that night. In the following morning, the Chief of Jaitan Layar still served food for the guests, especially those who came from the neighboring villages, as well as the dignitaries from other countries. Everyone ate the meal being served with relish. After breakfast, all guests bid their farewell to the Chief of Jaitan Layar. They were thankful to him.

One dignitary from the neighboring states said his goodbye to the Chief of Jaitan Layar, “Your Excellency, we would like to say farewell. I, representing all of the people who attended the celebration in your house, would like to say thank you to your wonderful reception. I wish your son can grow safely into adulthood. So long, until we meet again.”

The Chief was moved by the compliments of the neighboring countries’ dignitaries. He got fonder of his son. “Definitely, My Lord. I wish you a safe journey back to your home. Please send my family’s regard to your family, My Lord. I would like to extend my apology as well for our poor reception and services.” That was how the Chief said his farewell. Then, one dignitary said, “All is well. Furthermore, everyone admired your son. Aji is very handsome. It is only appropriate for him to be a respected person in the future. We believe that someday your child will be a great leader of the whole country. Allow us to excuse ourselves.” That was how the dignitaries bid their farewell. The Chief also wished that one day his son would be a capable leader.

The Birth of Princess Karang Melenu

The birthplace and way of life of each individual may vary. Jaitan Layar was indeed far from Hulu Dusun, but the will of God All-Just shall prevail, even if their places and events might be similar or almost identical. What happened in Jaitan Layar also occurred in Hulu Dusun, or more accurately at Melanti Hamlet. The Chief of Hulu Dusun and his wife, Babu Jaruma had a life that was comparable to the Chief of Jaitan Layar's life. In Hulu Dusun, Melanti Hamlet, the Chief of Hulu Dusun and his wife Babu Jaruma almost lost all hope.

Their desire to have a child from their marriage was always a wishful thinking. The Chief of Hulu Dusun had gotten old. Wrinkles started to appear on his skin. So was his wife, Babu Jaruma, she could not stay upright as before when she first married the Chief of Hulu Dusun some decades ago. The Chief of Hulu Dusun was actually fortunate. He lived well and was respected as a leader by the villagers. But all these wealth and position could not take out his heartache. He was troubled, his mind distraught. He realized that a human life is limited by death. However, his hope to have a descendant had never come true. His wife's anguish was not less. She accepted that she was not a perfect woman who could make her husband happy.

One night, after working the whole day, the Chief of Hulu Dusun sat together with his wife. After a pause, the old man tried to open

a conversation. “My wife, our ages are advanced. My strength is dwindling away. Yet...” He stopped, could not continue. He worried about offending his wife.

But Babu Jaruma swiftly replied, “I know what it meant. However, there is not much I can do. I have been living respectably well, but God does not allow me to carry a child. Would God listen to our prayer? Or, should we wait for another few years? I think we need to persevere first.”

Listening to his wife’s words, the Chief of Hulu Dusun was touched. He didn’t have intention in his heart to denounce his wife. In fact, he was blaming himself. “My wife, I do not blame you. Perhaps it is caused by my own barrenness. I do not know, sometimes I got really bothered by it. In truth, half of the time, I could not accept the fate that God has decided for me.” He said the words as he stared blankly at the ceiling of his home.

Since that conversation, the couple’s life went on as usual. Went to the fields by morning, came back home by evening, and had brief conversation before going to bed. However according to God’s will, one day something magical happened. The day suddenly turned into night. The *sky darkened* as black *clouds* congregated. It was really terrifying. The villagers thought the sky would fall down. Strong winds blew and thunders rumbled relentlessly, as if the world was about to perish. Everyone was frightened.

For seven days and seven nights the whole village was gripped with fear. The earth seemed to split. People did not dare to venture out of their house. They could only pray for God's protection. They wished the situation would calm down soon. Many people had to endure hunger. Their food supplies were dwindling. It was the same for the Chief of Hulu Dusun. His family ran out of provisions too. There was only a little rice left. Even that was mixed with sand. Forced by hunger, Babu Jaruma went into the kitchen, intending to cook the rice. But not a log of firewood remained. She called her husband to get some. Without thinking much, the Chief of Hulu Dusun took his machete out then cut the rafters of his house, splitted them, and turned them into firewoods.

In one of the split logs, there was a little snake. The Chief of Dusun paused. He stared at the baby snake. It was strange. The little serpent raised its head and looked up at the Chief of Dusun. It seemed pitiful, rousing his compassion. The Chief of Dusun understood the intention of the little serpent. He gently took it then called Babu Jaruma. When his wife came and saw the snake, Babu Jaruma felt a deep compassion. She asked her husband to keep the snakelet in her betel box. She fed it and gave it drink.

It was a miracle. After the snake went inside the betel box, suddenly the surrounding area turned bright. As if the nature was smiling happily. Everyone felt relieved. The villagers began to



open their doors. They went to their yard and saw the sun had decorated the sky. They saw the cocks crowed and the hens clucked. Flowers in the garden were blooming and emitting fragrance. The villagers felt it was very odd. They looked at each other happily, after being released from the terrifying nature.

Babu Jaruma continued with her life as usual. However, not like before, she had new activities after obtaining the little serpent. Babu Jaruma fed the snakelet with care. Occassionally, she stroked the growing serpent with affection. Like a child being caressed by its mother, the serpent felt comfortable in Babu Jaruma's care. It became tame and its body glowed. All who saw it felt no fear in the least, as the little serpent seemed wanting to greet everyone it came across.

The serpent grew bigger. The betel box could no longer accommodate the body. The Chief of Hulu Dusun felt pity. Worried that the serpent was uncomfortable while resting, he built a bigger space to house its increasingly larger body. But, in just a matter of days and months, it became huge. Its nesting place already felt crowded. In fact, the serpent seemed anxious. The container could not contain its body. Since then, the Chief of Hulu Dusun intended to build a cage for his serpent. So, he built a massive enclosure, almost half as large as the house in which he dwelt with his wife. In a discussion with his wife, the Chief said, "My wife, our serpent has been getting bigger. The container

could no longer house its increasingly larger body. What should we do? Should I build a large, open cage so the serpent could rest comfortably?”

Babu Jaruma nodded, listening to her husband words. “Actually, I also think the same. We will build a spacious cage. When do you start, Husband? The sooner, the better. It would be pitiful if the serpent stays cooped up for too long in that narrow container.”

The Chief of Hulu Dusun replied happily, “Yes, my wife. We should make a comfortable cage for it.”

He went to build the cage right away. The Chief of Hulu Dusun asked several people’s help to prepare it. A few days later, the serpent was transferred to a bigger cage. The Chief of Hulu Dusun felt relieved. He was glad that he was able to provide a convenient home for the serpent that he had considered as his own child. The serpen’s appetite was getting bigger. Its body grew fast. In just several months, the huge cage could no longer house the serpent’s body. Now it had changed into a giant dragon. The Chief of Hulu Dusun began to feel apprehensive.

The news about the Chief of Dusun who owned a giant dragon spread like wild fire. Many people became afraid when seeing it. They worried that they would be bitten by the giant dragon. The Chief of Hulu Dusun asked his wife to sit with him for a while. He started to speak calmly, despite his uneasiness and anxiety.

“My wife, it’s strange. As spacious as this cage is, it still could not house the serpent. I wondered. Its body was growing very fast and now it has turned into a giant dragon. I worry that the serpent would get even bigger. Our house is not enough to shelter it. What do you think?”

Babu Jaruma really understood her husband’s feeling. She calmly said, “Husband, I’m also afraid. What would it become later on? Perhaps this house will collapse. The dragon was growing rapidly. I leave the decision in your hand. I will follow what you have decided.” She pitied the dragon. Correspondingly, the giant dragon also seemed sad. The Chief of Hulu Dusun was tongue-tied. He was scared but also felt pity for the giant dragon that he had raised with affection for a long time.

In the evening, the Chief of Hulu Dusun planned to sleep near the massive dragon. He said to his wife. “Let’s do this. The dragon must be a mystical creature, not just an ordinary snake. It will not do something bad. I will sleep next to it tonight. Maybe I will receive some revelation to help me overcoming this problem.”

Babu Jaruma quickly answered him. “I agree with you, Husband. I’m sure that the dragon is very kind. Tonight, both of us shall pray next to it. Please bathe first. I will prepare our dinner this evening. I will also feed the dragon. It seemed hungry already.”

Time kept moving on. The sun gradually entered its resting place. As dusk crept in, the oil lamps were lit and mounted on the wall near the giant dragon. Since early evening, the Chief of Hulu Dusun and Babu Jaruma had sat next to the dragon. They both prayed continuously. Every so often, Babu Jaruma stroked the dragon. The skin felt smooth and gleamed. In his heart, the Chief of Hulu Dusun prayed, “O, God. I’m willing to raise the dragon. But I could not provide a home for the dragon. It grew so fast. God, please show me the right way, and have mercy on my wife too. She loved the dragon very much, but she also worried that she could no longer take care of it.”

That night the moon was on the western horizon, indicating that midnight had come. The Chief of Hulu Dusun asked his wife to sleep. His eyes were almost fully closed. He could not hold back his drowsiness. Both fell asleep next to the dragon.

The hands of the Chief of Hulu Dusun were laid on the smooth body of the dragon, as were Babu Jaruma’s feet. The dragon seemed to sleep soundly. It felt comfortable in its cage. That night the dragon looked very peaceful. It could feel its parents’ great affection. Within a few beats, the Chief and Babu Jaruma were fast asleep. That night the Chief of Hulu Dusun dreamed. In his dream a soft and clear voice said, “Father and Mother, I am grown up now. I have a really big body. I know that both of you feel uneasy. You are worried that you will not be able to care for

me. The villagers are also afraid of me. So I implore you. Build me a ladder so that I can climb down from the cage. I will leave.” The voice was melodious. It is the voice of a stunningly beautiful woman. “Mother, your kindness to me will not be in vain. I wish God will repay you for what you have done. Soon, I shall trouble you no longer.” The Chief of Hulu Dusun woke up. He remembered well the invincible voice in his dream.

The next morning, the Chief of Dusun told his dream to his wife. “My wife, last night a beautiful sylph visited me. I was asked to build a ladder for our dear dragon, so that it can climb down and leave. What do you think?” Babu Jaruma said, “Thank God, we should make it right away. I want to know immediately what the mystical dragon will do. I’m sure that something strange will happen to the dragon.”

Both agreed to make the ladder immediately, with the hope that the dragon could climb down easily. The Chief of Hulu Dusun hurriedly called some of his neighbors. He took several bamboo canes and rattan to bind them. Not long after, the ladder was finished. The Chief of Hulu Dusun was relieved. He supposed the dragon will slide down with ease. After everything was in order, the Chief of Hulu Dusun patted the dragon, as if he was talking with a human being he said, “Hey, I have made the ladder. Now, you can climb down. Be careful not to fall.” At that moment, Babu Jaruma stood next to her husband.

It seemed the dragon understood what the Chief of Hulu Dusun instructed. It started to move. Slowly, its head and body slithered down to the ladder. But, the dragon stopped. The ladder broke. It could not withstand the excessive weight of the dragon's body. Everyone was stunned. The dragon immediately pulled its head back and returned to the cage, curled up while looking at the Chief of Hulu Dusun.

The Chief of Hulu Dusun knew what the dragon's gaze implied. He quickly yelled to the people there, "Now, we need to make a stronger ladder using bornean ironwood. This dragon's body is humongous. Prepare them immediately."

At the order of the Chief of Hulu Dusun, they immediately lifted stacks of ironwoods that were kept on the side of his house. They worked deftly. This time the Chief of Hulu Dusun was confident of his success. The dragon should be able to climb down safely. Around four or five hours later a new ladder had been completed. The Chief of Dusun immediately drew near and patted the dragon's body. He stroked its head with affection. The Chief said, "My little treasure, I have made you a ladder of ironwood. It is much sturdier than the previous one. You should go down now!"

As if it understood what the Chief of Hulu Dusun said, the massive dragon raised its head slowly, and blinked twice to signify that it would be climbing down immediately. It was moving unhurriedly, slithered towards the ladder. Its head was

already on the first rung. Its body continued to slide down the ladder. However, something strange was already meant to happen. When a fifth of the dragon's body was on the ladder, suddenly the ladder broke. It collapsed and fell apart. Everyone who saw it became dumbfounded. The Chief of Hulu Dusun was also stunned. Babu Jaruma was silent. She stared at the dragon. She felt compassion in her heart. "Poor dragon. Forgive me, I could not prepare a decent ladder for you," she said.

The dragon only blinked its eyes silently. Soon, it pulled its head back up and curled up again in the cage. After a pause, the Chief of Hulu Dusun said to everyone in his house. "You have worked well. We built the ironwood ladder, but it was shattered, unable to support the body of my child, the dragon. Now, you can go home. I will let you know next time. Please come when I ask for your help. I will pray to the Most Compassionate One to seek guidance in the next few days. Hopefully, I will receive a revelation later."

As usual, the Chief of Hulu Dusun and his wife slept with the dragon. Before going to sleep, they sang their prayers. In his sleep, the Chief of Hulu Dusun felt as if he was dreaming. He heard a very gentle voice. "Chief, try to get me out of the cage. Make a ladder from the best wood. Don't just use any wood. Pick *lampung* wood. Use bamboo canes for the rungs and *lembiding* roots to bind them. I will be able to climb down the ladder." The Chief of Hulu Dusun learned that it was the voice of the dragon.

Not yet awake, he heard the voice saying again in his dream. “Later, I will head out to the river banks and submerge myself in that great river for a moment. Take Babu Jaruma who has raised me from childhood to the bank. Then, watch me.

When I sink down a lot of bubbles will come up. Ask Babu Jaruma to keep an eye on these bubbles. Thank you for your kindness.”

The voice disappeared just as the Chief of Hulu Dusun woke up. He was stunned and could not say a word. He woke up his wife and told her about the voice in his dream. His wife was excited. “Husband, it was the voice of our dragon. Early tomorrow morning, I will ask some people to look for *lampung* wood, bamboo canes, and *lembiding* roots immediately. They can be easily found on the outskirt of the forest over there. I believe the dragon will be able to get down. I will follow it wherever it goes until it disappeared. It will be according to the message that you have received in your dream.”

The Chief of Hulu Dusun replied, “Very well, then. Early in the morning tomorrow I will ask help from our neighbors to search for *lampung* wood, bamboo canes, and *lembiding* roots. Go boil water now. Cook up some rice for the people who will help us later.”

His wife hurried into the kitchen. The Chief prepared his machete and *mandau* knife. He intended to work immediately that morning. He beckoned several people to come over then said, “Listen, last night I slept beside the dragon. By midnight, a great drowsiness came over me. Then, I dreamed. In that dream, the dragon told me to look for *lampung* wood, to cut several bamboo canes and find some *lembiding* roots. We will make a ladder out from *lampung* wood and bamboo canes, and tie them securely with *lembiding* root. After finishing your meal, go into the woods and find those materials. Today, we will build the ladder. This time, I’m sure the dragon can climb down safely.”

The men worked skilfully. Before noon, the ladder had been completed. Then, the Chief of Hulu Dusun came to the dragon that he raised. “Listen, if it was truly your voice last night, I have fulfilled your wish. The ladder has been completed. You may get down now and go as you please. Your mother and I will follow you wherever you go.” The dragon raised its head with flickers in its eyes. With a happy expression, the dragon slithered down the ladder. This time it can climb down safely. The dragon continued slithering towards the river bank without turning back. A large crowd followed it. Babu Jaruma was moving along behind the dragon. She could not wait to see what will happen. The Chief of Hulu Dusun was of the same mind.

Upon their arrival on Mahakam riverside, the dragon threw itself into the river, swam around, going upstream and downstream.

Babu Jaruma and the Chief of Hulu Dusun hesitated on the edge of the river. Then, they rode a canoe to the middle of the river. It was truly strange. In that moment, the earth seemed grieving. The sky suddenly turned jet black. The rain fell heavily and strong winds blew in every direction. Everyone was panicked because of the terrifying situation. Mahakam water was churning violently. The Chief and his wife hastily paddled their canoe ashore. With difficulty, both of them finally reached the edge of the river.

Another strange thing occurred. Suddenly the Mahakam River was bubbling forth that water was no longer visible. The Chief of Hulu Dusun and his wife quickly boarded the canoe and paddled with all their might. They rushed down to Sudiwo River, a rivulet of the Mahakam River. As the couple paddled along, they heard the sound of a crying baby. The cries became more audible. It was heartbreaking. The Chief of Hulu Dusun moved his canoe faster in the direction from which the sound of the crying baby came. His heart pounded, "What have I got myself into? That was the crying sound of a newborn baby. But there were only mounds of frothing bubbles seen in the whole river." His wife did not say anything. Both were looking to their right and to their left.

Unexpectedly, the Chief of Hulu Dusun and his wife saw a rainbow piercing into a mound of froth in the sea of bubbles. He

stared at the sky. Clouds seemed to converge towards the mound in the middle of the river, as if overshadowing the froth. From that place the baby's crying sound came. However, the voice gradually softened until it was gone. He looked at the river side close to the mound of froth. It was lush with wild flowers. The flowers bloomed and exuded fragrance that filled the air.

Babu Jaruma could not take her eyes off that mound. A moment later, she whispered to her husband, "Husband, look! That mound of foam." Her husband trained his sight to the foam mound and watched it carefully. "My wife, do not be careless, keep watching." From inside the foam a gleaming jade appeared. The gorgeous jade shone brilliantly. The Chief of Hulu Dusun and Babu Jaruma swiftly paddled their canoe there and got near the place where the jade showed up. Once they were near, it was clearly visible. It turned out to be a little baby laid out on a big gong. The gong emanated a golden radiance.

The Chief said in a low voice to his wife, "Look, there is a tiny baby on the gong. Keep calm. Let's see what will happen next." His wife nodded and kept staring at the baby on the golden gong. Slowly, the gong rose steadily. A giant dragon was seen supporting the big gong. It was noticeable because the dragon rose above the pile of foam.

The Chief of Hulu Dusun stayed quiet and alert. The dragon sat firmly atop a huge golden buffalo with spurred feet and a trunk. It

was not an ordinary bovine. It had a pair of beautiful golden wings on the back, spurred feet like a garuda, fangs like a lion, and tail of a giant dragon. In fact, its entire body was covered with golden scales. The body was very robust. The mystical buffalo was known as *lembuswana*.

Lembuswana gradually descended into the churning river. After it was gone, the dragon sank down. It was a disturbing scene. The Chief of Hulu Dusun did not want to lose the little baby. When the gong and the baby floated, he grabbed them and put them in the canoe then paddled ashore with all his might. In the canoe, he saw the baby holding a clump of gold and an egg. But a female chick hatched from the egg before the canoe even reached the shore.

The Chief of Dusun and his wife hastened their pace. He wanted to get home soon. He was ecstatic for having found a little baby girl, a mystical baby in the middle of a frothing river. Upon arriving at home, the baby was bathed and bundled in finest clothes, then placed on a swaddling blanket. One by one, the neighbors came. They were glad to see that the Chief of Hulu Dusun finally got a baby.

That afternoon, the baby cried all of a sudden. The longer it was, the louder it got. Babu Jaruma looked restless. The Chief also came to his wife who was holding the baby in her arms. Babu Jaruma knew that the baby was thirsty. “Oh no. What should we

do? I could not produce milk but the baby was very thirsty.” The Chief of Hulu Dusun was also troubled.

It was a cold night. Sleeping in exhaustion, Babu Jaruma heard an invincible voice saying, “Do not be dismayed, Babu Jaruma. Nurse the child immediately. You will be able to feed your baby. Do it now.” Those were the words said by the invincible voice to Babu Jaruma. It was a miracle, indeed. Before long, her milk came out. Babu Jaruma immediately nursed the pretty baby.

That night, Babu Jaruma dreamed again. In her sleep, an invincible voice gave her a message, “Babu Jaruma, you shall name the baby *Princess Karang Melenu*. Take good care of her. The baby has the same origin as Princess Junjung Buyah. So, she can be called *Princess Junjung Buyah* too.”

After a while, she heard the voice gave another message. It said, “Babu Jaruma, make sure that your baby does not touch the ground for forty days and forty nights. If she is going to walk, carry out an *erau* ritual. Also, do not forget to place your child’s feet on the head of a buffalo and a dead boar. Lastly, before getting on the ground, put your child’s feet on a piece of iron! Do not forget this.” The invincible voice disappeared. At that moment Babu Jaruma woke up from her slumber. She quickly roused the Chief of Hulu Dusun and told him about the message that she had received in her sleep.



Three days later, the house of the Chief of Hulu Dusun became very crowded and lively. That day the naming ceremony will be held together with the ritual to cut the umbilical cord. A lot of neighbors came. Food was served in abundance and many cattles slaughtered. Entertainments were performed. They were rejoicing. That morning, the Chief of Hulu Dusun addressed all the villagers.

“To all distinguished guests who have come to my house, let it be known that several days ago, my wife received a message from an invincible voice in her dream. I was told to name this child. Therefore, I shall name her Princess Karang Melenu, otherwise known as Princess Junjung Buyah”. Everyone who came was happy to see the lovely visage of Princess Karang Melenu.

Traditional Rite of Passage for Princess Karang Melenu

Princess Karang Melenu grew into a beautiful girl. Her parents loved her very much. The place where the Chief of Hulu Dusun lived became lively. Every day neighbors came one after another, just to get a glimpse of the Princess. In the same way, Aji Batara Agung Dewa Sakti at Jaitan Layar also grew into a valiant and handsome youth. When she turned five, Princess Karang Melenu did not like to stay at home. She wanted to play outside. It made both her parents worried. One day, the Chief of Hulu Dusun said to his wife, “My wife, your child is getting bigger. She doesn’t like staying at home. She always wanted to play outside. Be careful. Take good care of her and keep her safe.”

Babu Jaruma always complied with her husband’s wish. The Chief of Hulu Dusun still remembered the message given to Babu Jaruma. So, the preparation for their daughter’s ground-treading ritual was made immediately. It was a joyous occasion, full of festivity. Be it old and young, men and women, everyone was present and they rejoiced. The meals being served were all delicious. The dances and performances were dazzling.

Numerous officials from the neighboring villages attended the celebration. It was the will of God that a similar party was also held in Jaitan Layar. The Chief performed *erau* ritual for Aji Batara Agung Dewa Sakti. The festivity in Jaitan Layar was not

different from the celebration in Hulu Dusun. The festivities went on for forty days and also continued throughout the night.

Babu Jaruma performed the henna ritual on the fortieth day. Princess Karang Melenu's nails were polished with henna, a colored liquid that was obtained from a plant sap. The baby looked more charming and her visage prompted everyone to keep looking at her. The ritual continued and the princess was brought to the riverbank to be bathed there, where young boys and girls also took a bath together. They were happy to be able to see the princess and bathe together with her.

A short while later, the Princess returned home in a procession. She was placed on a dais in a beautifully decorated chamber.

Each day, Princess Karang Melenu grew bigger. One day, *lembuswana* suddenly appeared before Princess Karang Melenu. "*Lembuswana*, come here, bring me to the top of the dais. Sit down so I can ride on your back!" said Princess Karang Melenu. The mystical beast understood the princess's words. It soon lowered its body. The Princess immediately climbed up and rode on its back. And so she managed to sit on top of her dais. Everyone who saw it was in awe. Princess Karang Melenu's beauty was highly praised.

At that moment, Princess Karang Melenu asked her parents and everyone else to head to the dais first. She would be departing

alone. Without much hesitating, the Chief of Hulu Dusun, Babu Jaruma, and everyone else walked toward the dais. Princess Karang Melenu followed behind. She rode the *lembuswana*. Everyone who came over was surprised seeing Princess Karang Melenu's loveliness.

That day the celebration ended. All of them came home with pride and endless admiration for the Princess. And so, they went through their life as usual. The men were working hard in the field and the women lended their helping hands.

Aji Batara Agung Dewa Sakti was Searching for a Companion

Days went by, and the months turned into years. In the same way, Aji had grown up in Jaitan Layar. His body was getting more robust and sturdy.

He had olive skin and sharp eyes, full of charisma. As an adult male, he wanted to roam around the world, left his village to search for a girl who will be the love of his life.

The Chief of Jaitan Layar chuckled when listening to his son's wish to seek out his love. In a smooth optimistic tone, he said, "My son, you have grown up. God has prepared the girl who will be your companion. It's just that her whereabouts is not yet revealed."

Upon listening to his father's explanation, Aji blushed. However, he felt glad and his heart was full of pride. He should be meeting his sweetheart soon. Then, Aji said to his parents. "I will roam far and wide to find my life companion. I have to seek out seven limes on a twig first. The fruit was not available in Jaitan Layar. I will find it wherever it is. Hopefully, it will give me a clue to find my love." The Chief of Hulu Dusun nodded. Then, he said, "Right, my son. Go find the village where the lime is, and find your true love. Go now. Take your servants to accompany you."

Aji departed with his servants immediately. He did not forget to bring his favorite rooster. They arrived in a village. One of the servants was careless and made the rooster fly away. After flapping its wings madly, the rooster crowed out very loud.

The two servants chased the rooster everywhere. It kept running, down the ravine then up the hill. Both servants did not want to lose their track. They did not want to make their master angry. After some time, the rooster came into a garden then perched on a branch of a lime tree that bore fruits. They wanted to pick up the rooster, but again, it flew and ran away. When seeing the lime tree, the servants took seven limes on a twig as their master ordered. From the top of the lime tree, the two servants can look into the house where the garden was. There, they saw a lovely maiden. She was so stunningly beautiful.

Both were awed. “Hm, I have lived for quite a long time. But this is the first time I have seen such a gorgeous girl.” They didn’t even blink.

Seeing the two men, Princess Karang Melenu threw young shoots of betel leaves into their mouths. They quickly came to their senses. At that time, Princess Karang Melenu did not say a word but showed her displeasure.

Both servants realized their mistake. They had picked the limes without permission. “Both of us would like to apologize. We are



willing to be punished or to pay for the limes that we have picked.” Both of them sat still and bowed to the ground. They looked pitiful.

Princess Karang Melenu quickly said, “You should know that these limes are priceless. Give them back to me. Remember what I said. Do not tell this incident to anyone. If you break your promise, I will be angry at you. Now, go, leave this place immediately.”

The two servants left quickly. The limes had been returned to the rightful owner. They could not forget the beauty of the princess they just saw. Both of them finally arrived at the place where Aji was waiting. They said, “Your Highness, in Melanti Hamlet there is a princess so beautiful. Your Highness’s rooster went into her house, the house of the Dusun Chief. We could not bring the rooster back. Your Highness should go there and ask for the rooster.”

It did not take long for Aji to think. He went to see the Dusun Chief right away. In good manner, Aji asked the owner of the house, Babu Jaruma. “Excuse me. I just heard the crow of my rooster. I knew the sound very well. Could I have my rooster back?”

Babu Jaruma replied, “I’m sorry, I cannot, Sir. It was my child’s rooster.” Looking around from where he stood, Aji saw a fine-looking betel box.

“Babu Jaruma, whose betel box is it? It seemed like it does not belong to an ordinary person,” asked Aji.

Babu Jaruma kept quiet, then said, “Please look elsewhere, Sir. Your rooster is not here.”

Aji did not give up. He went into the house. Princess Karang Melenu’s heart was palpitating. She tried to avoid him at all times. But it only strengthened Aji’s resolve to meet the princess that his servants had told him about. No matter where the princess went, Aji followed.

He kept following the Princess until she got tired and so her hands could be held by Aji. It was the will of Almighty God that they met and married. Both kept silent for quite some time. Aji Batara Agung Dewa Sakti said, “Princess, you are the love of my life. I have been looking for you a long time. I have climbed mountains and roamed through valleys and canyons. God has brought me here to meet you, in the house of the Chief of Hulu Dusun. Would you marry me? We shall lead a peaceful life in my father’s country.”



Still, Princess Karang Melenu said nothing for a long time. But in her heart, she very much admired the young man stood next to her.

Awhile later, the princess answered, “Very well, then. If what you had said is true and you want to have my hand in marriage, ask your parents to meet mine.”

Aji Batara Agung Dewa Sakti was ecstatic. He was both happy and relieved. He said to Princess Karang Melenu, “Princess, I’m so happy. Well then, I shall go back and meet my father and mother.”

So, Aji said his goodbye to Babu Jaruma, Princess Karang Melenu’s mother. Aji Batara Agung Dewa Sakti did not want to tarry there and left Hulu Dusun. He already made up his mind. Aji wanted his parents to propose to the Princess.

The Wedding Ceremony between Aji Batara Agung Dewa Sakti and Princess Karang Melenu

In just a matter of days, Aji had arrived in Jaitan Layar. The Chief of Jaitan and his wife saw their son's happiness too. Their son had definitely found his future wife.

Aji did not want to delay longer and told his parents. "Father and Mother, your son has wandered far for many days. God has chosen a life companion for me. This son had met Princess Karang Melenu in the house of the Chief of Hulu Dusun. So, Father, please send an envoy to propose her. Princess Karang Melenu is willing to be my wife as long as Father makes the proposal. How do you think, Father?"

The Chief of Jaitan Layar was very happy. Soon, he would be having a daughter-in-law. His wife immediately replied, "Very well, your father will send an envoy right away. Hopefully, she will be your wife."

The Chief of Jaitan Layar invited all the relatives as well as elders of the kingdom. He sought their counsel about the marriage. And so, they discussed about the time to go to Hulu Dusun. The auspicious date had been set. The entourage was ready to set off with the dowry. They bounded for Hulu Dusun. They did not come in vain. The Chief of Hulu Dusun and his wife happily accepted the Chief of Jaitan Layar's proposal. The Chief of

Dusun welcomed the envoy with delight. He and his wife could not wait to give their daughter's hand in marriage. The wedding of Princess Karang Melenu and Aji Batara Agung Dewa Sakti will soon be held.

The people of Jaitan Layar and Hulu Dusun were rejoiced and hailed the marriage between Aji Batara Agung Dewa Sakti and Princess Karang Melenu.

The merriments lasted forty days and forty nights. Officials and royal dignitaries from the neighboring kingdoms also attended the wedding of Aji Batara Agung Dewa Sakti and Princess Karang Melenu. The festivities were enlivened with the performance of *tingkulan Eyang Ayu* from Hulu Dusun and *gamelan Perwata* from Jaitan Layar. All gods in the heaven also witnessed the wedding ceremony and blessed their marriage. Princess Karang Melenu was crowned and named the

Wife of King Kutai Kartanegara Ing Martadipura. A year later, the couple's happiness was complete. They were blessed with a son named Aji Batara Agung Paduka Nira, who would become the future second king who will succeed his Father, Aji Batara Agung Dewa Sakti. Meanwhile, the Chief of Jaitan Layar and his wife felt very lucky to have a caring son and daughter-in-law. And they were blessed with a grandson who will succeed their family history.



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1. S-2: Ilmu Sastra Universitas Gadjah Mada Yogyakarta (2008-2010)
2. S-1: Sastra Indonesia Universitas Gadjah Mada Yogyakarta (1990-1996)

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1. *Potret Kehidupan Masyarakat Dayak Benuaq dalam Novel Upacara Karya Korrie Layun Rampan* (2016)
2. *Perjalanan Puisi Kalimantan Timur* (2010)
3. *Cerita Rakyat Putri Karang Melenu (Putri Junjung Buyah): Analisis Struktural dan Nilai Budaya* (2007)
4. *Lonceng Kematian Karya Ray Rizal: Kajian Struktural dan Sosiologis* (2006)

Judul Penelitian dan Tahun Terbit (10 tahun terakhir):

1. *Keteladanan Tokoh Sangumang dalam Legenda Dayak Ngaju Kalimantan Tengah: Kajian Sastra Lisan* (2013)
2. *Biografi Pengarang Ahmad Dahlan dan Ahmad Nur* (2006)

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