

THE KING OF ROKAN
Raja Rokan

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

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Translated from
Raja Rokan
adapted by Sri Sayekti
based on the work of Sulistianti
published by
Language Development and Cultivation Agency
Ministry of Education and Culture
in 2016

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

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THE KING OF ROKAN

1. The Kingdom of Pagaruyung

The Kingdom of Pagaruyung was located in Benia City, Pagaruyung, West Sumatra. Despite the fact that it was led by a female leader, the Kingdom of Pagaruyung was famous and well respected by the leaders of the neighboring small kingdoms. Its people were living prosperously in their safe and peaceful country.

The Lady King's name was Putri Sangka Bulan. She had seven children, i.e. Sutan Seri Alam, Sutan Sakti Alam, Sutan Alam Perkasa, Sutan Indra Sakti, Sutan Cahaya Mangindra, Sutan Indra Cahaya, and Putri Sari Bulan.

Out of her seven children, Sutan Seri Alam proved bad far the most ill-tempered. He was indeed a handsome and strapping lad, yet his characters left much to be desired; he was arrogant, he also mistreated ordinary people quiet often and liked to steal.

The Lady King was often saddened by the behaviors of her eldest son, who was to become her successor as a king. He failed to attend his civics lessons, refused to master the martial

art, as well as many other sciences. To make matters worse, he had a penchant for gambling and cockfighting. He would say to his mother, “Dear Mother! I am the true heir of the kingdom, regardless of whether I follow the rules of this palace or not. Let my younger siblings learn these things so that they may aid me when someday I become a king.”

Putri Sangka Bulan seethed with anger at her son’s words. “Sutan Seri Alam, My Son! You should not think that way. It is you who has much to learn so you may one day become a good king.”

“No... there’s no need for that. I’m fit for the job without all those lessons, Mother!”

He spoke with his hands on his hips. His words left the palace courtiers speechless.

There was rarely a day when Sutan Seri Alam was not at the cockfight arena accompanied by his personal attendant, Bujong Tuo.

While leisurely talking with her other children in the palace garden, Putri Sangka Bulan asked her servant, “I haven’t seen my eldest son. Where is he?”

“Forgive me for saying this, but I saw him with Bujong Tuo,
“answered her servant.

“He is at the cockfight again? What will this kingdom turn into if its future king does nothing but cockfighting every day?” said the Lady King, her face was gloomy. The beauty of her palace garden with colorful beds could not console her heart. Beautiful colorful asocas, sweet smelling and sparkling white jasmynes, as well as fragrant roses did not offer much to alleviate the sorrow of the Lady King’s heart.

Putri Sangka Bulan looked up to the skies as she tried to keep her tears from falling down her cheeks. It seemed like she wanted to keep the sadness to herself. The servants and her six children bowed their heads sadly. A sprinkle of water from the pond, where fish were jumping in and out, brought back The Lady King from her thoughts.

Having heaved a sigh, Putri Sangka Bulan then said to her six children, “My Dear Children, our get together today has come to an end. Now you may take a rest since we have talked for quite some time. The skies outside are dark, which means that the rain will come soon.”

Her six children then left the palace garden while sad atmosphere still lingered there.

At the cockfight arena, Sutan Seri Alam cheered joyfully with his personal attendant. “Hip hip hooray, come on! Go attack and strike that rooster!”

The cheers of those gamblers were so loud that arena where they were watching the fight seemed to almost be knocked down by the noise. Some of the spectators brought gongs, drums, and timpani, beaten incessantly to support the fighting roosters. Finally, Kumbang got to hurt the neck of his rival.

The roaring shouts of the spectators were deafening, “Hooray, hooray, hooray, Kumbang wins!”

The gamblers who had bet on Kumbang went inside the arena, prancing around happily.

Sutan Seri Alam and Bujang Tuo did not immediately come home to the palace. They wanted to celebrate their victory first, accompanied by the friends of Sutan Seri Alam. “Uncle Bujang Tuo and My Friends, let’s eat and drink to our hearts’ content today. It will be on me as today I have won a lot of money.”

“Thank you, Young Master. Boys, today we are having a big party,” said Uncle Bujong Tuo.

They drank bottles of toddy and bought all of the foods served in the tavern. They swallowed *lemang*¹, *tapai*², *kue bugis*³, *onde-onde*⁴, one by one. The tavern's owner was of course glad of his sudden fortune.

“How did I get so lucky?” mumbled the tavern's owner. That day he earned much more than usual.

The entourage of Sutan Seri Alam reached home when the sun was about to set. They entered furtively through a back door of the palace. Sutan Seri Alam did not want his mother to notice his arrival.

“Be quiet, Kumbang! Do not make any sound, lest my mother will find out!” whispered Sutan Seri Alam to his rooster.

“Where have you been, Young Master, that you come home this late?”

The greeting of the guards at the back door was not heeded by Sutan Seri Alam. He ignored then, advancing his steps to reach his palace as soon as possible.

¹ a traditional food made of glutinous rice, coconut milk and salt, cooked in a hollowed bamboo stick

² a traditional fermented food made of cassava

³ a soft glutinous rice flour cake, filled with sweet grated coconut

⁴ sesame seed balls

Sutan Pamuncak, the teacher of Sutan Seri Alam, saw the arrival of the Crown Prince from a distance. However, he did not think it was the right time to greet his pupil.

“I’d better go see my pupil later tonight,” said Sutan Pamuncak in his heart.

When the wood alarm was struck nine times by a guard, Sutan Pamuncak walked towards the residence of the crown Prince. Since there was nobody in the front porch, he went directly to the Prince’s room. Slowly he knocked at the door three times while saying, “Young Master, here comes your teacher!”

The Crown Prince was still awake and could hear the greeting of his teacher. He then opened his room’s door.

“Teacher, please come in. What is it that brought you here?” asked the Crown Prince.

“Forgive me, Young Master, forgive me, but I would like to talk to you.”

“Fine, do tell me what you would like to talk about,” said the Crown Prince.

“My Dear Crown Prince, how come you no longer attend my lessons? Young Master, you are the heir of this famous Pagaruyung Kingdom. I am worried that you will be lagging

behind in understanding the traditions which should be mastered by a king.”

“Uncle, I understand your concerns. But, aren’t you going to be by my side all time when I become a king?” replied Sutan Seri Alam.

“Forgive me, Young Master. It is true that there will be many intellectual advisors at your side. However, according to my opinion, it would be better if you master the government procedures yourself. That way, you will earn your people’s respect,” said Sutan Pamuncak.

“So what should I do then?” asked Sutan Seri Alam, a bit annoyed.

He considered his mother and his teacher very fussy and old-fashioned.

“You are the heir of Pagaruyung Kingdom, Young Master. I hope you would be willing to lessen your penchant for cockfighting and spend more time learning,” said Sutan Pamuncak.

“With all my respect to you, Uncle, let us continue this conversation tomorrow morning because I need to go to sleep now,” said the Crown Prince.

With deep regret, Sutan Pamuncak excused himself from the presence of the Crown Prince. “Good night, Young Master, sleep well.”

In his sleep, the Crown Prince was restless since he remembered that his mother had often shown her dislike to his behaviors.

“You have to understand your rights and obligations, but it seems that your younger brother is more entitled to becoming a king since he behaves better than you!” once his mother scolded him.

“It’s true that I am ignorant of the traditions. I am fed up with all those old-fashioned rules in this palace. I am indeed the eldest son, the heir of the kingdom in Pagaruyung country. But mother has lost her hope in me,” said Sutan Seri Alam to himself.

As days passed by, the mischief of the Crown Prince worsened. In the meantime, his younger siblings were diligently learning from Sutan Pamuncak. Sutan Sakti Alam stood out in his intelligence among his other siblings.

A thought crossed the teacher’s mind that the second son would someday become a king.

“Well...hopefully he will be able to save the Kingdom of Pagaruyung,” wished Sutan Pamuncak.

2. The Greatness of the Lady King Putri Sangka Bulan

The people in the Kingdom of Pagaruyung earned their living by trading, cultivating rice, and farming. Many of them succeeded as whole-sale traders. They had earned a lot of profit and so they became rich. The peasants and farmers were living prosperously as well.

Many kings of the neighboring kingdoms showed their interest in joining the Kingdom of Pagaruyung. The Lady King Sangka Bulan gladly granted their wish so once a month they attended a royal gathering in Pagaruyung.

In order to express her gratitude to the Lord Almighty, the Lady King intended to organize a thanksgiving party, and so she invited the neighboring kings, who voluntarily came, to discuss about the big feast.

Before the meeting began, the Lady King held a banquet for her guests. On the dining table, many special dishes of West

Sumatra region were served, such as chicken *gulai*⁵, fish *gulai*, and *dendeng*⁶.

Various other dishes such as roasted chicken, grilled fish, and satay were also served on the table. The festive atmosphere there was very well appreciated by the invitees.

As the Lady King was the only female leader in West Sumatra region, the neighboring kings highly respected her. Thus they felt honored when they received an invitation to Pagaruyung. After the banquet was over, the meeting to discuss the thanksgiving party preparation was commenced.

“If the discussion alone is this merry, how much more will the thanksgiving party be?” commented one of the kings, who participated at the ceremony for the first time.

After the meeting, they took a break in the palace garden while enjoying various dances presented by many beautiful young women.

The kings, in particular the young ones who were not married, were allowed to choose those dancing girls, who came from all of the country, as their future wives.

⁵ a type of food containing rich, spicy and succulent curry-like sauce

⁶ thinly sliced dried meat

The entertainment show was indeed intentionally held by the Lady King as an opportunity for the single kings to mingle. Other than the royal guests, ordinary people were also allowed to watch those graceful and fascinating dances. They sat orderly in half circle formation a bit far from the royal stage.

However, amidst the merry feast, the Lady King looked a little bit sad.

“What is the use of this merry-making and grandeur? Will my eldest son be able to replace my position and become a better king than I am?”

She was upset with the attitude of her eldest son who grew more unruly these days. In every occasion, she always prayed for strength.

“Dear God...strengthen my faith to lead my children. Keep me from despair!” begged the Lady King in her prayers.

Her deep thoughts were abruptly interrupted when her youngest daughter came to her. The Lady King smiled at her to hide her sadness.

“What are you worried about, Dear Mother? It seems like you’re holding back your sadness. I understand that you are

disappointed with my brother's behavior. But you still have other children, including me!"

The Lady King, still trying to keep her sadness to herself, did her best to look tough in front of her daughter.

The meeting was over as the night fell. The neighboring kings excused themselves from the presence of The Lady King.

The wise woman stood not far from the palace gate to bid farewell to her guests.

Her three children were there as well to keep her company. They wore their uniforms, green clothes and sarong with colorful patterns. Golden head bands added the beauty of their outfits. They said goodbye to their guests amicably. Despite her young age, the Princess looked stunning and whoever saw her would surely remain spellbound.

One month later, another royal gathering was held. All of the palace servants were involved in the grand banquet. The invitees had arrived to attend the ceremony. All of a sudden, a palace courtier barged in to make a report regarding the eldest son.

“What is the matter, Uncle? If it is about my eldest son, let’s talk later outside the court!” ordered the Lady King to Sutan Pamuncak.

After the gathering was over, the Lady King found out that Sutan Seri Alam had beaten up Bujang Tuo because his fighting rooster had lost. He accused Bujang Tuo of not having taken care of the rooster. The Lady King then ordered Sutan Pamuncak to settle the issue.

Sutan Pamuncak hurried to the cockfight arena. Some spectators stepped aside, being aware of his presence. He saw Bujang Tuo was badly injured by the rod.

In the cockfight arena, Sutan Pamuncak saw Sutan Seri Alam who was fighting against Sutan Sakti Alam. Since he was cornered, Sutan Sakti Alam exerted his martial art skills in his attempt to break his brother’s counterattack.

Sutan Pamuncak managed to break up the fight and invited Sutan Seri Alam to go back to the palace.

“I am lucky that Teacher has come soon, otherwise I would have been black and blue,” thought Sutan Seri Alam.

Several days later, Sutan Pamuncak looked for a strategy. He ordered his two students and Sutan Sakti Alam to keep an eye

on the behaviors of Sutan Seri Alam. Every day after they finished attending the lessons, the three of them wore poor clothes to disguise themselves and mingle among the rascals without raising any suspicion. They did it very carefully so that Sutan Seri Alam was oblivious about it.

While witnessing the attitudes of his brother, Sutan Sakti Alam wondered, “How come he is able to act like an adult in front of his friends and yet so spoiled in front of mother? Ah! I completely don’t get it.”

In his friendship loop, Sutan Seri Alam was indeed a powerful influencer. He always told his friends not to be cruel to each other. When talking to those rascals, Sutan Seri Alam showed his charisma and was well respected by them.

One day, Sutan Seri Alam stole his mother’s money and was caught red-handed by his youngest sister who, despite being fearful, managed to confront her big brother. With tears in her eyes, she said, “Brother... what you are doing is so low. How come you dare to take the money which is not yours? I’m going to tell this to mother!”

Feeling threatened by his sister’s statement, Sutan Seri Alam tried to defend himself and chased her, but the Youngest Princess ran away quickly to avoid his grip.

“Watch out, if you dare to tell her, I will cut off your beautiful hair!” The little girl did not heed her brother’s threat. When she came to her mother’s presence, she immediately reported what she had just seen.

When she saw her daughter running to her hastily, the Lady King tried to soothe her.

“Calm down, Daughter, what’s wrong that you look so worried and scared like this? You’d better go and take a rest in your room!”

The young Princess could not contain herself anymore and poured out everything in front of her mother, who immediately went to see Sutan Seri Alam.

“My Son, is it true what your sister has reported to me? Is it true that you have taken my money? Aren’t you ashamed of yourself? You should have set a good example for your younger sister!” the Lady King reprimanded her son.

Sutan Seri Alam tried to come up with an excuse. He said that the money would be donated to poor people who did not have enough to eat.

His mother asked severely, “Poor people or lazy people? If your intention were indeed to donate to poor people, this is not

a correct way to do so! You should have told me about this plan.”

The Lady King’s face reddened with anger, but she tried to suppress her anger because she did not want anybody to hear them. After he saw that his mother had gone, Sutan Seri Alam quickly disappeared from the palace to go to the gambling place where his friends welcomed him warmly.

“The Prince is here, let’s continue our game!”

Sutan Seri Alam said, “Friends, my mother has just scolded me.”

“Oh, that is nothing so don’t you worry about it, My Prince, ha...ha...ha!” commented one of them, a strapping lad with a dark complexion.

They continued their game after Sutan Seri Alam gave them his money.

One day, Sutan Sakti Alam who had been given a task to spy on his brother came to see his mother. He told her about the plan of Sutan Seri Alam who, along with his friends, would go away from the Kingdom of Pagaruyung. The Lady King was not surprised to hear Sutan Sakti Alam’s report and she did not

think that they would be gone for too long. She even predicted that they would come home soon.

“A kid like him will not stand a rough life outside the palace,” thought the Lady King.

While they were still talking about the bad manners of Sutan Seri Alam, the palace was stirred with his mischief again. He had stolen some ingredients from the storage and jewelries that belonged to the Youngest Princess, as well as those of his mother.

The Lady King was startled to see his son outrageous behavior. Before leaving, Sutan Seri Alam had said to them, “Mother and Young Siblings! I will go away. Do not expect me to return. I will prove to you that I will still succeed, even though I do not become the king of this country. I want to be a king in another country!”

Sutan Seri Alam declared those words out loud without even looking sad or reluctant to leave the palace of Pagaruyung. With a strong determination, he quickly left with all of his provisions. The whole royal family was speechless to see him go.

Sutan Pamuncak witnessed Sutan Seri Alam’s behaviors in silence. He was taken aback while thinking to himself, “Thank

God that his mother is really strong in dealing with her eldest son's bad behaviors.”

The elderly man helped the Lady King walk to her chair to sit down. After Sutan Seri Alam and his younger siblings left, Sutan Pamuncak stayed with the Lady King, and advised her “I truly admire you, My Lady King. You are such a strong woman. Children belong to God who has entrusted them to us. If God's will is for him to grow up outside your control, you have to let it be, My Lady King. Maybe that way, Sutan Seri Alam will gain experience to help him change from an unruly kid into a good one who could serve others. Isn't experience the best teacher? It will mature his soul amidst the people. My hope is that you would still pray for him to be under the protection of God the Almighty.”

“Uncle, you are right. I feel guilty that I have been neglecting him all this time and let him become such a rascal,” complained the Lady King with reddened eyes as she was on the verge of tears.

“Cry if you must, My Lady. It may relieve your heart. Your tasks as a king are indeed heavy. But remember, he is not your only child. You still have six other children who with good manners. One of them will replace your position one day. They are far better off than their eldest brother. I have been

preparing Sutan Sakti Alam to replace his brother. I also have sent my three strong students in disguise to mingle with the rascals. They are now among the entourage of Sutan Seri Alam. I am sure that he could gain knowledge from those three brilliant students of mine.”

Having heard the statement of Sutan Pamuncak, the Lady King became more confident that her son would be alright while wandering around. She then came closer to Sutan Pamuncak and knelt down to kiss the knee of her guru. Sutan Pamuncak quickly brought the woman to her feet.

“This is like a nightmare, Uncle!”

“Happiness and sadness indeed come and go in our lives. Therefore, we should be ready to face them. Try to have more faith in God. Hopefully our faith shall reduce our sadness and our request shall be granted by God the Almighty,” said Sutan Pamuncak.

3. The Wandering of Sutan Seri Alam

After leaving the palace, Sutan Seri Alam joined the group of cockfight gamblers who welcomed him gladly. Sutan Seri Alam presented his plan to invite them to wander around with him in search for a new territory. Spontaneously, his best friend accepted his idea. He immediately stated his willingness

to come along, so did his other friends, promising earnestly to serve him with loyalty.

“I hope our trip will be full of excitement,” said Sutan Seri Alam.

The whole group consisted of thirty people, including Sutan Seri Alam. Some of them were married couples, while the rest were still single.

“Well now... who are not married yet?” Sutan Seri Alam asked his friends.

“Some of us are, Young Master. There are three bachelors among us: Sutan Mahmud, Sutan Bagindo, and Sutan Bujang Muda,” reported one of Sutan Seri Alam’s men.

“That means I am not the only one,” said Sutan Seri Alam.

Those three bachelors were the students of Sutan Pamuncak, which had been intentionally inserted in the entourage. Sutan Seri Alam did not know anything about it. Before the group departed, Sutan Mahmud led them in prayer to ask for safety during the trip.

“Why bother to pray?” grumbled one of them.

Sutan Mahmud did not heed the comment since most of them solemnly followed the prayer reading for the safety during their oncoming trip.

They set out after the prayer. Nobody bid them farewell as they only received suspicious stares from several villagers.

The group consisted of a walking troop, horse riders, and a series of horse carts with food provisions.

“Hey, come over here... come on! Who wants to sit in the cart with rice, cassava, and corns?” invited the coachman.

“I’d rather walk than sit near such a fussy woman,” they said jokingly after seeing a woman sit leisurely on top of their goods.

“Watch your mouth or we will not cook for you!” replied the women.

“Come on, we have just started our trip. Do not talk too much. You’d better not quarrel in order to travel safely. Remember, we are already far away from our parents,” advised Sutan Seri Alam.

They walked with a high spirit which was clearly reflected in their cheerful faces. None of the group looked sad, and due to their cheerful attitude, no one felt any hunger at all until that

late afternoon. Sutan Seri Alam then decided to take a break after they reached the edge of the woods.

After a while, they arrived at the edge a forest which was not too dense. Not far from it, water was flowing from a creek where several black rocks were scattered in the middle of it. One of them took some water with a bottle he brought along.

“This is so fresh! This river water is potable.”

So they stopped there and set up a hut. Some of them hurriedly looked for firewood while some others tried to hunt for animals.

“Don’t go too far, lest you’ll get lost!” warned one of the group members, reminding his friends to stay safe.

There were ten group members who broke through the deeper part of the woods. Apparently there were a lot of hard-wood trees in the forest, such as pine, mahogany, and sapodilla trees. All of a sudden they heard the leaves rustle.

“Friends, it looks like an animal is passing by near us,” said the group leader.

Their prediction was right. A male deer was confused, looking for a way to escape. They tried to aim at it. One...two... three... and the arrows were flying fast to hit the

deer. What a lucky day, they got a fat deer. One of the group members quickly took out his machete.

“Wow, we’re going to eat venison!” said the one with a machete.

Sutan Seri Alam suggested them not to finish all of the venison. Half of the meat was sliced thinly and dried under the sun, and then it was made into *dendeng* so that they could consume it as side dish during the trip.

“That’s true, Sutan. We need to be careful with our provisions,” said another man.

They were well aware of still having a long way to go. All of them were adept in accomplishing their respective tasks. The women were busy preparing rice and side dishes for dinner when one of them sneered at her friend, “Are we going to have lunch or dinner? Ha...ha...ha...ha.”

“As you wish... lunch or dinner there’s no big deal.”

One of them tried to remind them once again. “Sometimes we have to suffer to reach what we wish for. This is the lot of wanderers so we have to accept it gladly. When we were about to set out, didn’t we promise to serve Sutan Seri Alam in loyalty?”

After the venison was cooked, they ate together hungrily, enjoying the grilled meat of the animal they had hunted for.

“We are indeed lucky, still half-way and already got such a good fortune!”

“Well, hopefully we will always be this lucky.”

When the night came, they realized of being in the edge of the woods. They lit a bonfire to keep themselves warm. The fire grew bigger and its smoke soared higher.

The women started to feel tired and they lied down in the prepared tents. Out of the blue they heard a sound of broken branches in the men’s hut.

“That is clearly the sound of a wild boar,” guessed Sutan Bagindo. “But what if it’s the sound of a big snake crawling towards our hut?”

The situation turned dreadful, “Watch out, everyone, let’s keep our torch at hand. If it’s necessary, let’s light all torches and put them in the corners of the hut to keep the snake from entering. A woman came out of the tent and sprinkled salt around the hut. Sutan Bagindo looked around to check all corners. Their prediction could be right. Maybe the snake had smelled the fishy blood of the deer.

All of a sudden, Sutan Bagindo saw a big snake of approximately ten meters in length. Through the dim light of the torch, its scales glistened, displaying shining black and yellow strips.

Sutan Bagindo then chanted a spell to tame the snake. Then with confidence, he caught the animal. However, the chant did not seem to work to tame the snake as it coiled around Sutan Bagindo's body and its grip got stronger.

Sutan Bagindo's eyes were wide open, while his mouth kept repeating the spell. His both friends quickly came closer and chanted along with him.

Shortly afterwards, the snake's grip loosened. It looked like the animal had lost interest to disturb them. The spell cast by Sutan Bagindo was probably not efficacious that the snake became tame only after his friends had come to help. The snake was then caught and put inside a bamboo basket.

They looked relaxed again. However, the tranquility did not last long because all of a sudden, a tiger appeared. Actually the tiger was only curious to see who had created such a noise in his jungle. The King of Jungle wanted to show off his power. It was as if he wanted to tell those people that "This is my house, and you human beings, do not dare to disturb my peace and my friends in this jungle!"

He roared loudly. His voice echoed and made the whole forest tremble. The women fell to the ground with their faces on the ground and covered their ears with their hands. The dreadful situation repeated itself. This time it was even more frightening compared to that of the snake's arrival. Finally, they all went inside the hut which was guarded by several men.

Nevertheless, a woman who was sleeping at the edge of the hut was so terrified. A guard came closer to the hut and tried to comfort her.

“Calm down, My Friend! What are you afraid of?”

Out of the blue Sutan Seri Alam showed up. The hut guard tried to explain why they were all scared. Sutan Seri Alam smiled. He patted the back of the guard and whispered to him, “Oh, well! Be careful! You have to protect this hut until tomorrow.”

“Of course, Young Master, I am ready to watch out for them.”

The commotion abated. It was the turn for the guards to be on the alert. All of a sudden two shadows of men, which were Sutan Bagindo and Bujang Muda, sneaked out of a cotton tree. Both were watching the surroundings of the hut from above the tree. Bujang Muda sat cross-legged on a branch and stayed

there with ease. After concentrating his mind, he started to chant a spell. He wanted to tame all of the wild beasts in the forest, followed by Mahmud Badarudin.

Their spell turned out to work very well.

The night became peaceful and quiet again. The tiger and other wild beasts had gone away from their place. The on-duty hut guards had put off some of the bonfires. Sutan Seri Alam tried to catch some sleep in which he dreamed of meeting an old man with white beard and white robe. In his dream, a snake also came to him, smiling at him while delivered a message, “Greeting, Young Man! I am Aji Panalihan. Do not kill the snake that you have caught earlier!”

Having heard the message, Sutan Seri Alam promised to obey it and then awoke. Yet he did not tell his friends about the dream. When the morning sun started to shine, Sutan Seri Alam sent some people to take a look at the snake in the bamboo basket.

They were startled because they could no longer find the animal in the empty. Sutan Seri Alam was also there to witness it.

“It’s so strange, the basket lid was closed and it has no hole either. Where did the animal escape from?” wondered Sutan Seri Alam.

“Oh, well, let’s just forget this.”

While saying those words, Seri Alam thought to himself, “Does it have anything to do with my dream last night? Is it possible that the snake is the incarnate tutelary spirit of this forest? I hope that we will have a safe trip.”

Since then, Sutan Seri Alam often pondered. “How foolish I am. My mother instructed me to learn from Sutan Pamuncak, but I refused it. Now I have come to my senses. Actually I do not have enough preparation to wander. Apparently wealth and determination only are not enough. I ought to possess a high level of martial art and leadership skills.”

From that day on, he started to learn from his three warrior fellows.

The next evening, Sutan Seri Alam summon his friends in a meeting to reveal his idea. He invited the entourage members to learn from Badarudin, Sutan Bagindo, and Bujang Muda, since the three of them were willing and glad to pass their skills to the other members. The women were also ecstatic to participate in the learning.

They continued the trip to look for a permanent residence. After reaching a plain with a river nearby, they stopped there to take a rest below some of the leafy trees alongside the river which became their shelter from the scorching sun.

After discussing about the resting place, they agreed to build a hut. Then they divided the tasks. Several people would construct the hut, some other would look for water and firewood, while some women were preparing the meals in the meantime.

In two days, they managed to finish building the hut. It took a form of a house on stilts which was big enough to contain thirty people. In addition to it, they also built several smaller huts to store food ingredients and equipment. The big hut was also used as the place to learn martial art and many other skills. The entourage of Sutan Seri Alam was encouraged to master them all.

The lessons then started with a justly organized work shift. Other than learning their martial art, they were also tasked with cooking, washing clothes, taking water, and cultivating plants. While learning how to shoot with arrows, they hunted for the animals around the hut. On certain days they organized a banquet and martial art show which created an opportunity

for Sutan Seri Alam to find out who among were the quickest to learn.

As days passed by, Sutan Seri Alam and his entourage kept sharpening their skills. Their residence became a learning hall where people who lived around the forest often came to participate in the lessons.

One day, a gang known for their ferocity and cruelty came to spy on their activities. At first, two robbers caught two women, who were washing clothes at the river, by surprise. When they were about to go home, those robbers followed them until they reached the learning hall of Sutan Seri Alam. Filled with fear, the women reported those robbers to their leader.

So did the robbers. Having learned about the situation around the hall and come back to their hiding place, one of them asked his other friends to get prepared in looking for preys.

“Listen, Friends! Let us formulate a strategy to disrupt their activities since I heard that their leader is the King of Pagaruyung’s son. Thus, we have to come up with our best strategies,” suggested one of the robbers.

The members of the gang then visited the famous the White Eagle hall of Sutan Seri Alam. They pretended to be lost

wanderers in order to be well accepted by Sutan Seri Alam. Having learned about the strength of the warriors at the White Eagle hall, they started to attack, making the situation eerie and a cry of an owl was heard in a distance.

The robbers divided their team into several groups. The first group seized the hut inhabited by the women, taking away their treasures with violence. The gruesome bandit leader destroyed Sutan Seri Alam's hut and intended to rob him of all his money and gold.

“Where is Sutan Seri Alam?” growled the bandit leader.

Without thinking twice, Sutan Bagindo moved forward boldly.

“I am Sutan Seri Alam. What is the matter? Let us talk about it in peace! What do you want?” replied Sutan Bagindo calmly.

In the meantime, Sutan Seri Alam tried to sneak inside the hut to gather his belongings and store them in a safe place. Bujang Muda swiftly ran away with the Prince's provisions along with three female warriors.

The fight between Bujang Muda's group with the robbers was inevitable. Fortunately, their strength was equal so that Bujang Muda could save the treasures of Sutan Seri Alam.

Bujang Muda quickly returned to their hall. Their provision storage hut was burnt. There remained only Mahmud Badarudin and several residents. The fateful event triggered a dispute among them. Mahmud Badarudin scolded and sneered at one of his friends, Malin Panjang, who had always thought highly about himself. That night he looked helpless, though.

“You can only boast. Where is your common sense? Don’t be haughty! We are being tested now. Our King is missing and you had no courage to follow them,” reprimanded Mahmud Badarudin.

“Please stop blaming at each other. What is the problem?” asked Bujang Muda.

One of them explained, “After claiming to be the Prince, he fought against the king of the bandits. Sutan Seri Alam had to interfere. Suddenly four robbers showed up and took away the Prince and Sutan Bagindo. They thought Sutan Bagindo was the Prince.”

Mahmud Badarudin was pensive in regret. He was very worried about his two friends who had been kidnapped and this caused anxiety around the learning hall.

Before leaving, the bandit leader had shouted, “If you still care about your leader, give us all of your belongings. I will be waiting at my nest in Bajang Ratu Hill.”

The warriors of the White Eagle hall were quieted. They did not dare to fight against those robbers since there were a lot of women and children among them. The women attended to the warriors’ wounds.

Before the robbers reached Bajang Ratu Hill, a hermit with white robe stood in their way, seizing Sutan Seri Alam off their hands. With swift and nimble movements, he managed to grab Sutan Seri Alam’s body while warning them, “Do not dare to disturb the King of Pagaruyung’s son! I am the one you have to deal with, if you dare! Catch me if you can!”

The robbers witnessed the event incredulously.

“What shall we do then with this other warrior? He claimed to be the Prince. He has deceived us.”

One of them suggested, “Let’s just leave him here to be attacked by the tiger.”

After a while, Sutan Bagindo regained his consciousness. He tried to chant a spell to alleviate the pains throughout his body

and then went looking for medicine herbs in the woods. He also prayed to God the Almighty to heal his wounds speedily.

After reaching his hermit's abode, Aji Panalihan took care of Sutan Seri Alam's wounds.

The old hermit was reminded of the King of Pagaruyung whom he had known very well. He was worried that the poison would spread in the veins of the Prince. While taking care of Sutan Seri Alam, Aji Panalihan advised him to repent from his bad behaviors.

“Did you behave that way at home? You are indeed damned, a son who is ungrateful to his own mother! As a hermit I am also responsible for the greatness of Pagaruyung Kingdom, let alone you as her son. Take care of your country! As a king's son you cannot avoid heavy tasks. The more you run away from difficulties, the more miserable your life will be. You will suffer constantly in the jungle. Now try to walk to the river with your hurting legs. Feel and think about your sufferings until you're aware of your mistakes!” said Aji Panalihan.

Sutan Seri Alam could only listen to the old hermit's words. He realized that the elderly man was the one who he had often met in his dreams. However, the Prince would not budge from his strong will. He did not want to go back to Pagaruyung.

Aji Panalihan realized that Sutan Seri Alam's determination was unwavering. Therefore he gave him this advice, "If you are so determined to do so, you should stay here for a while to learn some supernatural powers from me. Only by being equipped with those skills that you will be able to live independently one day."

"I am willing to obey your words, Guru. I have repented and I promise to never again act carelessly like I did before," said Sutan Seri Alam in tears in front of his teacher.

Having recovered from his wounds, Sutan Seri Alam started to learn martial arts from the hermit. Sutan Seri Alam was quick in understanding his teacher's instructions. His skills improved and before long he already mastered the dragon's poison skill and the wind-brush spell.

Every night, when he was about to sleep, Sutan Seri Alam always remembered his mother. Therefore, he always begged for God's forgiveness for his past mistakes and did not forget to pray for her that she would not be sad when thinking about him.

Meanwhile, Sutan Bagindo had ventured into many difficulties before he managed to arrive at the hermit's abode.

The arrival of Sutan Bagindo was welcomed joyously by his best friend. While shaking Sutan Bagindo's hands, Sutan Seri Alam whispered to him, "Thank you for being loyal to me. I promise to keep persevering in our struggles."

Aji Panalihan eventually made Sutan Bagindo his student as well. The young lad quickly mastered all movements that his teacher taught him. Having passed sufficient skills to them, Aji Panalihan let his two young students go while reminding them to not quickly give up.

Sutan Seri Alam was given a magical knife as a weapon during their trip. After bidding their farewells, they departed from the hermit's abode.

The atmosphere at the White Eagle hall was tense. Every day they stayed in vigilance to save the provisional treasures of the Prince.

"We have been sufficiently trained. Why don't we attack the gang since we need to build this hall again? We were separated from the Prince for almost three months. We want to get rid of the robbers, but Sutan Seri Alam keeps us from doing it."

"We'd better think of our next trip and hope to find a suitable area to build a kingdom," suggested Sutan Seri Alam.

Sutan Seri Alam and the entourage then decided to leave the place. He intended to look for a more adequate area to build a palace. In deep faith and with unwavering spirit, they believed they could make this dream come true. They set out together, leaving that place gladly.

4. The Coronation of Sutan Sakti Alam

Time passed by quickly. It had been four months since Sutan Seri Alam left the kingdom. The Lady King looked sad and disappointed her eldest son's behaviors, therefore she summoned Sutan Pamuncak to the palace to inform him her wish to hold a thanksgiving feast to coronate Sutan Sakti Alam as her successor.

However, Sutan Sakti Alam refused to be crowned king because he was still waiting for the arrival of his brother.

Having heard Sutan Sakti Alam's rejection, the Lady King complained to Sutan Pamuncak, "Sutan Pamuncak, I am in difficulties in determining the next king of Pagaruyung."

"Alright, My Lady King, I will think of a way and I will persuade Sutan Sakti Alam to accept your wish."

Like any other student, Sutan Sakti Alam was very devoted to his teacher. After Sutan Pamuncak gave him some

understanding, he was finally willing to become the king of Pagaruyung. The feast was held unpretentiously. The elders of the kingdom witnessed the solemn ceremony, which was held briefly since Sutan Sakti Alam was not yet married.

The Lady King was relieved after crowning her second son. She looked more cheerful and smiled more often because her burdens were much lighter now. She often talked leisurely with her children though sometimes she still remembered her eldest son. Therefore, she always prayed for his faraway son's safety.

With a smile on her face, the Lady King told her personal attendant, "Nila Gempita, call for the palace poet. I want to entertain myself by listening to his poems."

"Yes, My Lady King, I will immediately call Demang Palindih," answered Nila Gempita.

Shortly after, Demang Palindih arrived to her presence. "My Lady King, here I am." "Demang, I'd like to be entertained. Read me a poem!"

Demang Palindih inched closer to the throne of the Lady King. Having regulated his breath, "Rambun Pamenan" was then sung by his melodious voice.

Rambun Pamenan was a brave and robust young man from Kampung Dalam country. He departed from the palace, leaving his fiancée named Puti Dayang Sudah.

Rambu Pamenan headed for Camin Taruih country in order to free his mother, Puti Lindung Bulan, who was imprisoned by the notoriously cruel King Aniayo. Having gone through difficulties and harsh obstacles, Rambun Pamenan succeeded in taking his mother away from the prison.

Rambun Pamenang then invited his mother to come home to Kampung Dalam. When they arrived in Kampung Dalam, they were welcomed by their relatives. Puti Dayang Sudah immediately came to see her love again. Shortly after, the wedding of Rambun Pamenan and Puti Dayang was held. Rambun Pamenan was then crowned king and they lived happily ever after.

When the night was already late, the Lady King gave Demang Palindih a sign that it was time for him to go, having completed his task. Her face was beaming because her heart was pleased.

“Demang Palindih, thank you. You have made my heart glad. I am now more convinced that my son Sutan Seri Alam and his brother, Sutan Sakti Alam, will defend this country. A strong-willed person who is willing to fight shall succeed. Tonight

you have accomplished your task very well. I am pleased,” praised the Lady King.

After some time, Sutan Sakti Alam was crowned king. As she was getting old, the Lady King wished for Sutan Sakti Alam to find a wife soon. It was not difficult for him to accept the beautiful young woman, who was also a daughter of a nobleman in Pagaruyung Kingdom, whom his mother had chosen for him.

5. The Kingdom of Rokan

Sutan Seri Alam and his entourage had traveled for almost a week. Day and night Sutan Seri Alam always prayed, asking for a direction from God the Almighty to have everything run smoothly. During those times he was trained to be responsible as well. Day after day he grew quieter and seldom joked around. His patience increased and he was no longer short-tempered. He even always made peace when friction occurred among his followers.

On the seventh day, they walked almost all day long. By late afternoon, they found it difficult to cross the river, since it was wide and deep with swift currents. Silence reigned in the surroundings of the river, and there was not even a single raft to go to another side. Therefore, Sutan Seri Alam ordered his entourage to stop.

“We’d better stay overnight here and before night falls, tents will have to be set up as our shelter.”

Some of the members quickly prepared all of their equipment. Suddenly one of them showed up, prancing happily, “Friends, we do not need to make a tent. Not far from this place, near the old cotton tree, I saw an empty hut. The hut is big enough.”

The news made his fellows happy. After they found the empty hut, they remembered again of not having sufficient equipment to cross the river. Therefore, Bujang Muda invited his friends to make a raft.

“Oh, instead of making a raft, it might be better if we check first the depth of the river. Who knows, it might be shallow. Let’s dive inside it!”

Having heard Janang’s suggestion, Sutan Seri Alam nodded approvingly. They hastily went to the bank of the river. Three of Sutan Seri Alam’s entourage directly jumped into the water. “Friends! I will take a bath here as well.”

“Oh, are you asking me to watch you take a bath!?” said Sutan Seri Alam.

They laughed boisterously. The three friends of Sutan Seri Alam soon crossed the river and found out that it was not deep at all. “Hurray... hurray! We don’t need to make a raft. Let’s just carry the cart of our food ingredients!”

They agreed to leave the place to go to the empty hut to stay overnight there.

That night the whole entourage slept soundly due to their fatigue, except Sutan Seri Alam, who was thinking about his friends’ loyalty with gratefulness. They were always united and supported each other happily in making his dream come true. Sutan Seri Alam also felt guilty for having dragged his friends into sufferings. Once again, he remembered his mother and younger siblings who he had left for so long.

“Dear Lord, You are a loving God. Only to you I lift up my prayers. Grant us an adequate place to stay so that we can worship you. Amen,” prayed Sutan Seri Alam.

When the sun was about to come out, he fell asleep.

Secretly Sutan Bagindo observed Sutan Seri Alam from a distance. He forbade his friends to make a noise because he was worried that it would wake Sutan Seri Alam up. By morning, some of them went to the river to take a bath. The

women were busy preparing the breakfast in such a cheerful mood.

Suddenly Sutan Seri Alam woke up from his sleep.

“It is still early, Sutan. Go ahead and sleep some more. I will be vigilant here. I saw that you stayed up very late last night!” Sutan Seri Alam flashed a sheepish grin.

“Thank you for always taking care of me, Friend! It looks like my prayer to find a residence will be soon granted. I fell asleep by morning and had a beautiful dream. In my dream, we were together in a scenic plain, quite far from the sea level. The sun seemed to be so close to us and was shining brightly. We were all happy. Does it mean that soon we will be able to find a beautiful residence?” whispered Sutan Seri Alam to his friend.

“I do hope what you have dreamed of will come true soon,” said Sutan Bagindo, in response to his leader’s words.

After breakfast, they were preparing themselves to cross the river. The female warriors of the entourage did not have any difficulty in bringing their belongings when as they crossed the water.

Sutan Seri Alam said that the horse he was riding on could carry three people. Women who wished to ride a horse were allowed to come along with him, along with some toddlers.

The rest of them crossed the river by gripping a stretched rope, which they used as banister, to avoid being carried away by the currents. Six tall men were instructed to push the cart of food ingredients. They cheered out loud as the water made their clothes wet up to the waist.

“It doesn’t matter at all for these clothes will dry up quickly with the help of the blowing wind. And now, even if we wet ourselves, nobody will know!” they joked with each other.

Their erupted laughter broke the silence. Even though it was already afternoon, they kept continuing their trip because they could not wait to reach their destination. Their enthusiasm made them willing to even have lunch while walking. When Sutan Seri Alam saw it, he decided to take a break.

The entourage used the opportunity to rest in a field next to a pond with clear water. During their break, some of them took a dip in the pond, and others took a nap. They were waken up when the entourage was about to continue their trip.

By night, Sutan Seri Alam's entourage arrived in a village. As an outsider, Sutan Seri Alam reported his arrival to the village leader.

"Yes, I am the leader of this village. You and your entourage are very welcomed to stay overnight in my house, Young Master. It is our tradition to welcome the guests to sleep at my house," the kindhearted village leader welcomed them warmly.

"Thank you very much for your kind offer. We would like to have your permission to stay one night in this village since we have to continue our trip tomorrow morning."

"Very well, then. All of your people may sleep at my house though some of them have to sleep in the porch. Kids and some women may occupy the bed rooms."

Having heard the offer, one of Sutan Seri Alam's men whispered to him, "Your Majesty, according to my opinion, we should accept his offer."

He was hoping that his leader would not waste that kind offer. Finally, Sutan Seri Alam decided to accept the friendly offer of the village leader.

They had been asleep for just a moment when all of a sudden, the bamboo alarm was beaten repeatedly. The entourage of Sutan Seri Alam was the first to hear the noise.

Sutan Seri Alam got up quickly, tidied his clothes, and grabbed his reliable weapon. A village official reported to their leader that there had been a robbery. The village leader nervously reported the fateful event to Sutan Seri Alam and sought his aid, which was of course granted by Sutan Seri Alam gladly.

“The commotion came from the house of our king. Let us walk to the east, Young Master,” instructed the village leader.

In the meantime, the house of the little king was pillaged. A group of robbers tried to steal his treasures and kidnap his daughter and wife. The troop of Sutan Seri Alam arrived on time and immediately managed to conquer the robbers. The little king and his family were relieved to know that their enemies had run away.

Later, the village leader introduced the guests who had helped them. The little king gladly introduced all of his family members, including his daughter, the Youngest Princess. The little king’s name was Sutan Rajo Sidi. His kingdom’s name was Muara Tais. The king’s wife suggested Sutan Seri Alam to postpone their departure with his entourage because the

king's family would like to hold a welcoming banquet for them.

“Sutan, we'd better accept her suggestion. Who knows this delay is a good sign for us.”

Sutan Seri Alam listened to his loyal friend's advice. He also said to himself, “This is fortunate, since I would like to get to know the king's daughter better.”

Night turned morning without they realizing it. The entourage of Sutan Seri Alam returned to the house of the village leader where some of them continued their sleep.

“Ah, I'm going to sleep so that I will dream of joking with the king's youngest daughter in the banquet tomorrow,” said one of Sutan Seri Alam's men.

“You're so presumptuous to dream that way.”

“Well, we're free to dream of anything, after all.”

Sutan Seri Alam admired the friendliness of the Youngest Princess. He did not only admire her intelligence, but was also smitten by her beauty. Sutan Seri Alam promised her to drop by the king's house when he had free time.

In addition to having an opportunity to get to know the Youngest Princess, Sutan Seri Alam also obtained a clue to keep walking to the east in order to find a good location.

The banquet continued, and as night fell, it grew merrier and merrier. Various dances were presented by the youth of Muara Tais.

The following morning, having bid their farewell, they departed to continue their trip. The friendship among them was now much strengthened. The queen provided them with foods for the trip and told Sutan Seri Alam to come back and visit them any time.

They had been walking for almost two days when Sutan Seri Alam came up with a strategy. “What if we divide ourselves into two groups? Six men shall go ahead of us to prepare for everything.”

“Master, how come you think that we will reach our destination soon? What if our other friends disagree with your idea? It would be better if you come along with them,” suggested one of them.

“Well, if you think that is better, we will go by horse. The second group may continue walking or wait in this place,” proposed Sutan Seri Alam.

Having reached a consensus, the first group departed ahead of the rest of them.

Less than two days later, they already found the desired place. Sutan Seri Alam got off immediately from his horse and went to the river to wash his face. Other members of the group followed him.

“This river water is so refreshing. It’s better for us to have lunch and rest here. This river is called Rokan River,” they said.

Not far from the streams of Rokan River, there was a village named Sembahyang Tinggi City. When they came to learn the name of the place, they knelt down to thank God because they had found the land of their dreams, a stretch of fertile land that was perfect to build their new palace. Their faces were radiant with joy and despite having traveled for several days, they did not feel tired at all.

Not far from that place, they could see several small villages and they promised to cooperate with the inhabitants of those rural areas. Sutan Seri Alam immediately sent Bujang Muda to go back and fetch the second group.

“My Friend Bujang Muda, tomorrow you shall depart to pick up the rest of our friends. Tell them this good news, and that

we will prepare a place for them. The coming of the second group will be welcomed merrily with our special home-made foods. I am willing to cook them myself,” said Sutan Seri Alam.

The following day, Bujang Muda set out to fetch their remaining friends. In the meantime, Sutan Seri Alam and his four friends worked hard to prepare for the coming of the next group.

They bought farming equipment, such as sickles, shovels, and rakes. They also did groceries shopping in the village market.

Thanks to the friendliness of Sutan Seri Alam, the inhabitants of the neighboring village were willing to help build a hut for them to reside.

On the fourth day, the commotion of the second group’s arrival was heard. The five men immediately got prepared to welcome their friends. The hut was ready and the exquisite foods were also cooked. Together they were happily enjoying God’s blessings.

Sutan Seri Alam invited them to prostrate in reverence to God to express their gratefulness. After that, they had fun until late at night by dancing and singing together. The following day, before anyone was awake, Sutan Seri Alam sneaked out of the

hut alone to go to a quiet place to ponder. Sutan Seri Alam remembered his family in Pagaruyung and realized that his family must have prayed for his safety all this time. Therefore, he prayed that someday he would be able to see them again.

“Mother, forgive me for my bad behaviors in the past. I’ve never meant to disappoint you, Mother. Trust me, I am determined to be a good leader even though I am now far away from the Kingdom of Pagaruyung,” he whispered, as if he were making a promise in front of his own mother.

By afternoon they discussed about the plans to construct a palace. They agreed to build a grand and majestic palace, like the Pagaruyung Palace and divided the tasks. A robust man was instructed to cut off the trees around the place to be made building materials. They design their palace to have a roof made of pieces of wood in form of a buffalo horn. They also wanted to build a vast royal audience hall so that all people would fit in it.

Sutan Seri Alam smiled when he heard their aspiration. He always discussed the palace construction with his men, in a hope that their noble wish would immediately come true.

The three warriors students of Sutan Pamuncak smiled contentedly because they had accomplished the task they had

received from their teacher to protect the Prince of Pagaruyung Kingdom.

“Sutan Seri Alam, first of all we’d like to apologize. We have wanted to be frank to you for quite some time. You should know that we were actually sent by Sutan Pamuncak and as his devoted students, we were willing to receive this task to join your entourage and provide aid to solve your problems.”

Sutan Seri Alam smiled at them approvingly, thanking them for their willingness to contribute with their strength and thoughts, as the whole entourage owed a lot to Sutan Bagindo and his friends.

Thus, he asked for their willingness to serve in the kingdom he was about to build. Sutan Seri Alam also told the three warriors to thank Sutan Pamuncak.

“If only Sutan Pamuncak had not been by my mother’s side in the palace and had not sent you to help me, what would have become of me,” said Sutan Seri Alam in front of his best friends.

“Do not think about it, Young Master. Even now we will still be loyal to you. We promise to not go back to Pagaruyung even though our relatives are still there,” promised the three warriors.

“Thank you for your willingness, Friends. After the palace is built, we will divide our tasks since there will be more works to do, which is to ensure the welfare of our whole group as well as the newcomers,” said Sutan Seri Alam.

The three warriors were relieved after they had revealed their true identity to Sutan Seri Alam.

Sutan Seri Alam became more mature after being separated from his family for so long. He had become such a responsible leader now. The truth was, Sutan Seri Alam had disliked the royal customs and regulations which were binding and severe. He wanted to be free. Despite of his status as a king’s son, he wanted to play with people from all levels in the community, rich or poor. He wanted to play outside the palace just like his other peers.

The construction of Rokan Kingdom went smoothly. They worked together in completing their tasks.

Several months later, the palace was already standing regally and therefore they wanted to organize a solemn thanksgiving banquet to crown their king. A woman who was excellent in

weaving started to make a *songket*⁷ fabric and a skilled seamstress was chosen to sew a royal robe for the king.

Sutan Seri Alam had divided the tasks by appointing his capable followers to work in places which would be developed into new regions in the future. He also listed the positions of royal courtiers, after selecting the courtiers who would be inaugurated as ministers and who would be promoted as chieftains.

As his inauguration was approaching, Sutan Seri Alam sent several of his men to fetch for the family of Muara Tais King as the guests of honor in the king coronation banquet.

On the coronation day of the King of Rokan, the family of Sutan Rajo Sidi from Muara Tais arrived with a fairly large entourage and food ingredients and clothing materials from silk as their gifts to the new king. Sutan Seri Alam was so glad to all of his guests.

“Apparently there are a lot of them. Hopefully the ceremony goes well,” he said to himself.

⁷ hand-woven in silk or cotton, and intricately patterned with gold or silver threads

Several high-ranked courtiers of Muara Tais Kingdom also brought along their daughters, with an intention to introduce them to the warriors from Pagaruyung.

Those pretty young ladies sat in a row, waiting for their task assignment. They assisted the women of Pagaruyung in the kitchen gladly, knowing that those women were good at cooking.

During his coronation, the King of Rokan declared the joining of several areas around his kingdom and so, besides inaugurating the king and his courtiers, the king also inaugurated the chieftains in those new areas, such as Melayu tribe from Padang Panjang which came from Luhak Rokan, Mandailing tribe and Mais tribe from Benia Tinggi City, Pelapang tribe from Muara Tais, Suku Piliang tribe, as well as Caniago tribe.

The King of Muara Tais was delighted to hear that some of Muara Tais people had joined the Kingdom of Rokan and expressed his intention to join them as well. All of the audience clapped their hands upon hearing the declaration of that humble king.

The ceremony went smoothly. The tree warrior students of Sutan Pamuncak remained close by their king during the whole event. All of those bachelors looked handsome and

mighty and they also had chosen their respective woman. The three warriors had a love relationship with the daughters of the neighboring kingdom's high-ranked courtiers while Sutan Seri Alam continued to court the Youngest Princess whom he had met before.

Before they parted, Sutan Seri Alam explicitly expressed his intention to propose to the Princess and to marry her soon. The guests were happy to hear the news of his marriage proposal.

Sutan Seri Alam and the three warriors promised to come again to the palace of Muara Tais and his friends were very happy to hear it.

After the inauguration ceremony was over, they once again were busy preparing the king's wedding. However, the king told them to hold a simple ceremony. "We have just made an initial step and are not yet as stable as we want to be, therefore we shall organize the ceremony wisely."

"So, there will be four couples standing together in the ceremony, Your Majesty? Wow, it's so amazing."

Soon the Kingdom of Rokan became greater and greater due to the knowledge and hard work of those four figures who had been now inseparable best friends. The three friends of the King of Rokan lived not far from the palace.

From their respective marriage, they begot their own offspring and continued to live happily ever after. Besides those four men, their other friends also obtained positions and powers in the new developed areas.

The King invited them to prostrate in front of God as the expression of their gratefulness. After that, they had a party until late at night.

6. The Prosperous King of Rokan

The Kingdom of Rokan advanced greatly and so many people from other areas came to dwell in that country. They were allowed to stay there and were given a piece of land if they donated a buffalo and several golden coins.

The donation would someday be returned and used for the welfare of the people. The buffaloes were lent to their peasants to plow their paddy fields.

At each new land opening, the King of Rokan designated a chieftain as its leader who was also responsible for the supervision of his inferiors' works. Almost every month the king designated a new chieftain.

The news of the Kingdom of Rokan's progress spread fast all over the country. A leader of a pirate gang who lived on the

ocean also heard it. Their leader, the Crowing Rooster Warrior, wanted to try his luck in the Kingdom of Rokan and so he dared to challenge the King of Rokan.

Upon hearing the challenge, Sutan Seri Alam flashed a cynical smile. “That would mean an insult to the great Kingdom of Rokan!”

The leader of the pirates insisted on challenging the King of Rokan and so he invited his friends to come with him to see the King.

“They should be wiped out and we shall not give them any chance. Who is able to face them?”

The warriors of Rokan Kingdom were eager to move forward to defeat the leader of the pirates. Before the fight began, the warriors of Rokan Kingdom had been trained to improve their skills. At the set time, they were ready to face each other. All people of Rokan witnessed the fight between the pirates leader against the warriors of Rokan Kingdom.

“What is it that they want?” whispered one of the spectators who were worried about the safety of Rokan Kingdom’s warriors.

“They probably dislike the greatness of the King of Rokan and just wanted to disturb our peace.”

“We will see. What will the other pirates do if their leader loses the fight? Will they submit to us or even declare a war against us?”

“Friend, please do not be unfair! You’d better give in or do you want us to capture and imprison you!? Come on, throw in your towel, or you will regret it later!”

When they heard the words of that female warrior, the gang of pirates felt ashamed. One of them then attacked his enemy ferociously. “Hey! You’d better work in the kitchen and shut up!”

The female warriors were infuriated with the words of the leader of those pirates.

“I don’t care! I’d rather die than be humiliated.”

The pirate became more audacious. The warrior of Rokan Kingdom was well aware of his enemy conditions, who shortly after, got much weaker. The Rokan warrior snatched his knife effortlessly and defeated his enemy, who knelt down in front of him. The Rokan warrior immediately lifted the shoulders of his enemy.

“Friend, I do not consider you an enemy. You are now my friend.”

The warrior of Rokan Kingdom invited the leader of the pirates to come to the King. The King smiled contentedly to see how the fight had ended and promised to give a piece of land to be cultivated by the leader of the robbers and his friends.

“I’m not going to seize all of your belongings. However, I want you to obey our rule. Each newcomer shall donate a buffalo and four golden coins for the development of this country.”

The leader of the pirates gladly promised to obey the rule. He hurried to see his men afterwards.

“Ah, we do not have to give them our belongings. With my intelligence, I managed to deceive them so I don’t need to give away my belongings,” boasted the Crowing Rooster Warrior.

The following day, he came to see the King of Rokan to give all of the requirements to become a resident in the Kingdom of Rokan. The King ordered the robber to promise that he would not trigger any trouble in their kingdom. If they created the riot in Rokan, the people of Rokan would not hesitate to expel

them. The Crowing Rooster Warrior feigned his obedience when he uttered his oath in front of the King.

On the set day, all of the people in Rokan Kingdom gathered together to attend the title award ceremony.

That day, the noblemen and elderly people in each new region would be inaugurated; Datuk Nan Setia, Datuk Singa, Datuk Diraja, Datuk Dalam, as well as several commanders with the titles of Sambal Seupih, Sky Balance, Sea Eagle, and Commander with Beautiful Eyes. The Crowing Rooster Warrior was awarded the title of Foreign Broom, a title he was very proud of. The women of Rokan Kingdom teased him.

“Foreign Broom, watch out if you dare to act like a hero again! Foreign Broom, actually I myself would have been able to defeat you yesterday!”

He laughed boisterously when he heard the mockery of those women.

The title award ceremony started and went very well. The Crowing Rooster Warrior was impressed with the grandeur ceremony and came to realize that the Kingdom of Rokan was not just an ordinary kingdom, but a vast and influential one. The King of Rokan was charismatic and loved by his people

that he regretted his bad behaviors and promised to serve the King with all of his men.

Time passed by and the people of Rokan Kingdom continued to live peacefully, until one day, a group of bandits arrived out of the blue and seized the belongings of the people, creating a tense atmosphere in the whole area of Rokan Kingdom.

The situation returned to normal and became peaceful again when several ulemas came to their country to teach them the religion of Islam.

The atmosphere in the country became tranquil, safe, and peaceful one more time as the people learned deeper about the religion of Islam. All day long the royal courtiers stayed on the alert and many young people learned the martial arts. Therefore, the robbers were afraid now to disturb the people of Rokan.

After reading the Koran, the kids went to the field to help their parents. The women wove sarong or *songket* material and sew clothes for men and women. Some of them became traders who became successful even in other areas outside Rokan. After accomplishing their worldly affairs, they flocked together to the prayer house to worship God and read the Koran until late at night.

The ulemas developed the teaching of Islam in rural areas. They also visited the Rokan Palace where Sutan Seri Alam welcomed them warmly.

He even suggested that all of the royal family learn the Koran. Now, the country of Rokan was very well-known because all of its inhabitants practiced the Islamic sharia obediently.

This news reached the Lady King in the Kingdom of Pagaruyung as well. The aging Lady King was happy to hear the news about her eldest son's kingdom. She missed him so much. The Lady King then delivered the good news to Sutan Pamuncak.

7. The Death of the First King of Rokan

The Kingdom of Pagaruyung planned to organize a wedding of Princess Sari Bulan. As the wedding date was getting closer, the Pagaruyung Palace was suddenly in an uproar since the groom-to-be was killed on his way to the Kingdom of Pagaruyung in an attack of a gang of robbers who wanted to steal the treasures brought by the entourage.

Upon hearing the tragic news, Princess Sari Bulan passed out instantly and fell ill. A lot of traditional healers came to heal her to no avail. The King Lady didn't know what to do but to hold a contest that whoever could heal her daughter, if it were

a man, he would be married to the Princess and if it were a woman, she would be adopted as the Princess' sister.

Somehow, the sadness looming in the family of Pagaruyung could be felt as well by Sutan Seri Alam who could not close his eyes at all throughout the night. Later he told Mahmud Badarudin about it. To make the situation better, the four of them gathered to read a prayer together, and only after that he finally could get some sleep.

In his sleep, once again he met the old man with white beard who had helped him before, who told him, "Son, go to Pagaruyung. Your mother and younger siblings need your help! Bring with you the magical knife I have given you!"

When he woke up, the King of Rokan tried to calm himself down and invited his three best friends to come see him.

"Friends, I will go away in a long time. I entrust the matters of this kingdom to your hands during my absence, is that alright?"

Having heard the words of their King, the three high-ranked royal courtiers answered him at the same time, "Of course, Your Majesty, we will take care of your tasks while you are away from the palace."

The King was satisfied to hear the statement of his friends. He immediately set out with his single brother-in-law. During their trip, they did not talk much. Sutan Seri Alam could feel the sadness of his mother because his sister was sick.

He spurred his horse as fast as he could to reach Pagaruyung as soon as possible. He did not wear his royal robe because he wanted to come in disguise in order not to draw anybody's attention. When he arrived in the Pagaruyung Palace, the place looked quiet. The flowers in the garden had withered. Apparently, the Youngest Princess had been ill for almost a month.

The royal courtiers were busy to seek for medicines to heal the Youngest Princess. The Lady King no longer cared for the coming guests nor asked about their whereabouts. The arrival of Sutan Seri Alam was also unnoticed by her, as she only cared for the recovery of her youngest daughter. The King of Rokan immediately went to his knees in front of the bed of the Youngest Princess. He took out the magical knife he had received from his guru and having chanted a spell, put the relic below her cushion, lifting his youngest sister's head to insert the magical knife there. He could feel her high body temperature.

Sutan Seri Alam prayed for three hours. His brother in-law, Sutan Mudo, despite not joining him in casting the spell, also prayed for the recovery of the Youngest Princess. Slowly the Princess started to open her eyes and gradually regained her consciousness, yet she did not recognize the person in front of her, who was her own brother.

The Lady King was very happy to see her daughter get better and hugger her tight. All of a sudden she asked, “Who are you, Young Man? I feel like I have ever seen you before.”

“Mother, I am Sutan Seri Alam, your eldest son!”

He did not wait any second to hug his mother, the Lady King Putri Sangka Bulan, who were in tears.

After catching up with his mother, the King of Rokan and his brother in-law took a shower and changed their clothes.

Now the Kingdom of Pagaruyung was reigned by Sutan Sakti Alam, the brother of Sutan Seri Alam. The looks of the King of Pagaruyung had not changed a lot since he had not faced many difficulties like Sutan Seri Alam.

“Your face looks a bit older, but you are still good-looking. Wisdom and patience radiate from your face as well. I am

proud of you, Son! My prayers, and your siblings' prayers have apparently been granted by God," said his mother.

"I can feel it, Mother. I have always been sure that you and my siblings have always been praying for me."

Seri Alam also remembered to thank Sutan Pamuncak, the elderly man who had poured the attention and affection that had been played a big role in achieving his success.

The Youngest Princess was carried by the shoulders by her personal maid. Her face was still pale, yet her lips managed to form a sweet smile. Rajo Mudo was smitten by the young woman and came closer to console her.

"You are actually good at consoling a saddened woman, aren't you!" said Sutan Seri Alam to his brother in-law.

The Lady King was eager to know all about her eldest son's life experience in a faraway country.

"Son, I would like to listen to your travel stories! Where and how did you get your wife? She must be beautiful, since I saw that her brother is also handsome."

Sutan Seri Alam smiled contentedly. He was happy to be able to cheer his mother up.

“I would like to know where you got the news regarding your younger sister’s health,” asked the Lady King to Sutan Seri Alam.

Sutan Seri Alam then told his mother, “On my way to Rokan country, a hermit named Aji Panalihan saved my life. He then taught the martial art and before I left, he gave me a magical knife.

When I was anxious, I usually meditated to ask for a direction from God, and in my sleep I dreamed of Grandpa Aji Panalihan who came to me again and told me to go immediately to the Pagaruyung palace. He said that you needed me. So without thinking twice, we immediately set out to come here.”

Several days later, the Youngest Princess’ face looked radiant the way it had used to be. Her relationship with Rajo Mudo got closer each day. It looked like her heart was already mended. Sutan Seri Alam suggested that the Princess be married to Rajo Mudo, which was immediately approved by his mother. Shortly afterwards, the wedding of the Youngest Princess and Rajo Mudo was held.

Two days after the big event was held, Sutan Seri Alam excused himself to go back to his country. On his way home, he intended to drop by the Kingdom of Muara Tais. Sutan Seri

Alam told Sutan Rajo Sidi in Muara Tais Kingdom that Rajo Mudo had been married to his youngest sister.

Having visited Muara Tais Kingdom, Sutan Seri Alam arrived safely at the Kingdom of Rokan where all of his relatives welcomed him warmly. The King was grateful and happy to see his country in a safe condition.

The wise King of Rokan started to educate his children and little by little, he entrusted the governance activities to the Crown Prince whom he supervised and coached him closely. The progress and knowledge of the Crown Prince advanced quickly since he was a smart and meticulous young man. In addition to it, he was very critical and never hesitated to question his father's policies which he could not really comprehend.

Sutan Seri Alam responded to his son's attitude with a smile. He remembered how he used to rebel against his mother. Sutan Seri Alam was able to guide the Crown Prince because he could understand his son's soul and so he never suppressed or exasperated the wishes of his son since he truly believed in his capability.

When his son reached the age of twenty-five, the King of Rokan started to get sick often. With God's will, the King of Rokan then passed away after he had done so much in building

the Kingdom of Rokan and had reigned for 41 years. His successor, Tengku Panglima Raja, was soon inaugurated with the title of Tengku Raja Rokan. The Kingdom of Rokan continued to grow and become more prosperous under the leadership of Tengku Raja Rokan.