

BETAWOL

Betawol

Property of the State
Not for Commercial Use

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

BETAWOL

Translated from
Betawol
written by Suwanti
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

Advisory Board	Dadang Sunendar Emi Emilia
Project Supervisor	Dony Setiawan
Translator	Nita Novianti
Reviewer	Raden Safrina
Editor-in-chief	Theya Wulan Primasari
Editorial team	Andi Maytendri M., Ayu Dwi N., Didiek Hardadi, Ferry Yun, Hardina Artating, Herfin A., Lale Li Datil, Larasati, Meili Sanny S., Putriasari, R. Bambang Eko, Rizky Akbar, Roslia, Saprudin Padlil, Syukron Ramadloni, Toni Gunawan, Yolanda

All rights reserved.

Copyrights of the original book and the translation belong to
Language Development and Cultivation Agency,
Ministry of Education and Culture, Republic of Indonesia.

Language Development and Cultivation Agency
Ministry of Education and Culture, Republic of Indonesia
Jalan Daksinapati Barat IV, Ramangun, Jakarta
Telepon (021) 4706287, 4706288, 4896558, 4894546
Pos-el: badan.bahasa@kemdikbud.go.id
www.badanbahasa.kemdikbud.go.id

BETAWOL

Who was that man? Where did he come from? Many people talked about the man, and many were curious about him. The young man of Tidung lived in a village right on the banks of Sibuku River, an area around Tawau. He was known for his good looks and gallantry. That was how he later came to be known by the name of Betawol, which means “man”, or more precisely, a handsome and gallant young man.

Besides his good looks, he was known for his versatility. He was skillful in fishing, shrimping, and collecting resin and rattan. Despite his good looks and gallantry, though, he was poor and thus had to work really hard to provide for both his parents.

Because of his poverty, the young man often became the object of ridicules of the people in his village. Betawol and his family had become so used to the humiliation and insults. However, the more insults and humiliation he received, the more driven he was to succeed by working really hard.

Since he was a teenager, he had been molded by both his parents to work in the forest and in the river. At such a young age, he already realized that he was the backbone of the family. His parents were old, and it was impossible for them to do the hard work.

Every day, very early in the morning, when the rooster had not even crowed, Betawol had run through the woods to hunt while looking for resin and rattan. He forced his naked legs to run in the woods, and he ignored the piercing thorns and the bulging roots of giant trees that bruised his legs.

Betawol always ran at full speed every time he left for the forest and returned from there. While tramping through the woods looking for resin and rattan, the blood dripping from the wound on his legs would serve as a feast to the leeches that sucked his blood out until they were swollen with his blood and fell off his legs. He worked his tail off from dark to dark. He ignored his fatigue. All he could think about was how to work hard to provide for his old parents. The hard life had shaped him into a strong and determined person.

One day, on his way home from the forest, he came across an old man who happened to be a martial arts teacher. Betawol told the old man the story of his harsh life. The old man understood and took Betawol as his disciple.

Years of being a disciple to the old man had made Betawol a master of many disciplines. He grew to be an even more handsome, gallant, and mature man. Since then, he had earned his fame among the people.

One day, exhausted from working all day long, Betawol fell asleep under the shade of a *gisok* tree (a large woody tree commonly found in the interior of the forest). While he was sleeping, out of nowhere came a tremendous noise. Half asleep, he staggered to his feet. In his half wakefulness, he thought the noise probably came from the unseen creatures that were known to frequently create strange noises in the forest.

Heavy rain started to fall on Earth, thunders reverberated, and lightning flashed incessantly. As he gained his full consciousness, Betawol rose to make sure that the noise did not come from the spirits dwelling in the forest. He tiptoed toward the source of the noise. He trod even more slowly as he came closer to its source. Apparently, the noise came from a beautiful lake that resembled heaven on Earth.

Betawol observed the lake and its surroundings. He checked to his right and left, and then, bending his body, he continued to sneak very secretively to the lake. His eyes combed the beautiful lake resembling a heavenly garden.

“Oh, my God!” He was both surprised and fascinated with the view before him. The lake was filled with six beautiful nymphs who had descended from heaven. They joked around, laughed, and had fun while soaking in the lake. Late in the afternoon, Betawol returned to the lake and saw another nymph descending from heaven through seven-color rainbow stairs, consisting of

red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and purple colors. The rainbow stairs immediately disappeared after the nymph stepped on Earth. Betawol carefully observed the nymph. Apparently, she was more beautiful compared to the six nymphs he saw before.

Before soaking in the lake, the youngest nymph undressed herself and placed her clothes on a spot different from where her six older sisters put theirs. When it was late in the afternoon and the day was getting dark, the six older sisters began to get dressed and headed for the rainbow stairs to get ready to return to heaven. Not long afterwards, the youngest nymph that went by the name of Dedari could be heard shouting in confusion.

“Oh, no! Where is my dress?” Dedari asked, while her eyes were busily searching for the dress.

“Where did you put it?” asked one of the older siblings who heard Dedari’s cry.

“I put it here. I remember it clearly!” Dedari said aloud.

“If it was put there, then the dress must be there. We have been going back and forth around that spot, but we did not see it,” argued the other sister.

“I’m not lying, why should I,” Dedari began to get annoyed.

“Then, what should we do? You can’t possibly fly back to heaven without the dress,” replied another sister confirming.

“Oh, God, what should I do now?” Dedari began to groan.

“If you can’t find your dress, we will have to leave you behind,” said the eldest sister.

“Oh, please don’t leave me,” Dedari pleaded.

“There is no other way. We must leave you behind,” said the second sister.

“Wait! Wait a minute, sisters!” Dedari shouted more loudly.

“What else should we wait for?” said the fifth sister.

“I don’t want to be left alone in the woods,” Dedari said in tears.

“It’s getting darker, little sister. We can’t wait until your dress is found,” said the fourth sister.

“Yes, dear. When the sun sets, we can’t fly to heaven,” said the eldest sister gently.

“Then that means I will be totally alone in the woods,” Dedari began to wring both of her hands.

“Yes, pretty girl. If we are late to rise to heaven, the seven of us will turn into humans,” said the fourth sister.

“Uh . . . I don’t want to turn into a human being,” responded the six siblings almost simultaneously.

“So you really have a heart to leave me her?” Dedari said, beginning to get upset.

“There is no other way, pretty girl,” replied the eldest sister while holding back the stream of tears at the corner of her eyes.

“There’s still time before sunset. If you can find your dress, we will go together to heaven,” the second sister finally assured Dedari.

Dedari turned and ran as she pushed her way through the lush foliage and passed the rocks piled up at some points. It was to no avail. She stumbled and collapsed as she wiped the stream of tears flooding her eyes.

“Our time is running out, little sister!” said the other nymphs almost in unison.

“That means we have to part,” said the fourth sister.

“Take care of yourself in the woods,” advised the second sister.

“Look for a safe and secure place,” the sixth sister added.

“I think it will be best to get out of this forest,” said the first sister worriedly.

“Look for a settlement,” the third sister chimed in.

“Yes, but be careful and stay alert,” said the fifth sister with red eyes.

“Goodbye, my sister,” said the nymphs almost simultaneously.

“My little sister, take a good care of yourself,” said the eldest sister, wiping the drops of tears on her cheeks.

Dedari looked up at her sisters hovering in the sky. The nymphs waved their hands while sobbing. The six nymphs soon flew through the rainbow stairs. The stairs slowly disappeared as the nymphs disappeared from the sight.

Dedari fell on her knees and cried incessantly. She felt totally alone now. She was gripped by darkness. Fear started to creep in as she thought of many frightening things. She feared of being suddenly attacked by wild animals. She also feared the spirits would attack her. In her fear, she could see snakes milling about the branches of giant trees. “Dear God, is it the end for me?” muttered Dedari in a husky voice.

She was too scared to open her eyes, afraid of moving from where she kneeled for fear of inviting the forest’s unseen creatures. Meanwhile, Betawol slowly approached Dedari.

“Are you alright, lady?” asked Betawol. He kept asking the same question that annoyed Dedari.

“No! Don’t disturb me!” shouted Dedari hysterically.

“I don’t mean any harm to you,” Betawol assured her.

“No! Don’t come closer!” cried the nymph, getting increasingly hysterical.

“Please! Do not come near me,” again, the nymph pleaded.

“If I don’t come near you, how can I help you?” said Betawol.

Dedari curled up as Betawol approached her. Out of curiosity, the nymph opened her eyes. Seeing a tall and big man standing right in front of her, Dedari cried even more loudly and she balled herself up in fear.

“Open your eyes!” Betawol commanded gently.

“No! I’m too afraid of the creatures in this forest,” she said sobbingly.

“What do you think these creatures are?” barked Betawol, getting annoyed.

“I haven’t seen them yet, but I’m horrified,” the nymph said, still sobbing.

“Whatever! If that is the case, I will leave you behind and I don’t care if a tiger comes and gobbled you up!” threatened Betawol irritably.

Dedari instantly opened her eyes. She couldn't imagine being alone in the forest and then really getting attacked by a tiger.

"No! Don't leave me!" begged Dedari.

"I will go with you. I don't want to get pounced by a tiger," Dedari replied.

"Well, then let's hurry up. We need to get out of the forest. It's not safe to be out here in the dense forest during the night," invited Betawol.

Dedari followed Betawol's steps. The young man walked briskly out of the forest. Despite the stumbling, Dedari could keep up from behind. Arriving at the edge of the forest, they took a break.

"Are you sure you'll come with me to my house?" asked Betawol repeatedly.

"Yeah, I'm sure now," Dedari answered firmly.

"My house is still very far away," Betawol continued.

"It's okay, as long as I'm safe from a tiger's attack," the nymph replied in a gentle tone.

"Can you walk for a long distance?" asked Betawol, probing.

"I'll try," the nymph promised.

“Alright then let’s continue our journey,” invited Betawol.

“Why now?” the nymph asked with a grimace.

“Lest we’ll be chased by a tiger,” Betawol replied jokingly. They then continued their trip with more fervor. After two hours of walking, they arrived at the edge of Sibuku River and an hour later they arrived at Betawol’s house.

“Mom! Dad!” greeted Betawol as he kissed the hands of both his parents.

“My son, Betawol. You’ve been in the forest for so long,” said the mother worriedly.

“Sorry if I have made you worried, Dad and Mom,” said Betawol with a regretful tone.

“It’s okay. What is important is that you have arrived safe and sound,” the father replied wisely.

“Who is this lady?” asked the mother as she stole a glance and observed Dedari.

“I found her crying alone in the woods,” replied the young man to his mother, blushing.

“Why was she alone in the woods?” asked the father curiously.

“It’s a long story, Sir,” Dedari answered, blushing.

“Actually I’m not a creature of Earth,” replied the nymph innocently.

“Then, who are you?” the mother wondered.

“I’m a creature of heaven, Ma’am,” the nymph replied softly.

“What? If you’re a creature of heaven, what are you doing here?” asked the father with confusion.

“My six sisters and I were visiting Earth to bathe in a beautiful lake resembling paradise,” the nymph explained.

“Then how did you end up alone in the woods?” asked the mother, equally confused.

“I descended to Earth much later than my siblings did, Ma’am!” She said innocently.

“Why were you late?” asked the father, increasingly confused.

“I’m not so nimble as my sisters are,” the nymph admitted.

“Alright. So what?” asked the mother, starting to get more confused.

“The six older sisters of mine woke up earlier than I did. So, I was left behind for the bath time on Earth,” replied the nymph innocently.

“Then, what did it have to do with your being alone in the woods?” asked the mother, puzzled.

“When my sisters urged me to immediately descend to Earth, I ignored their advice,” the nymph replied with wet eyes.

“What do you actually mean?” the father asked.

“When they invited me to climb the rainbow stairs down, I said I’d do it later, it’s easy!” replied the nymph, sobbing.

“So, what’s the problem?” asked the father in bewilderment.

“Finally, I came late to Earth and ended up alone in the woods,” the nymph blamed herself.

“Why didn’t you return to heaven together with your sisters?” asked the mother, holding her head.

“That’s because my dress went missing. So, I can’t go back to heaven,” replied the nymph while sobbing.

“Couldn’t you just cover yourself up with big leaves in the forest for a while?” asked the mother curiously.

“Because without the dress, we, the nymphs, can’t go back to heaven,” the nymph paused and continued wiping her wet eyes.

“Now, what are you going to do?” asked the father puzzled.

“Now I am cursed into an Earth’s creature, and I can’t go back to heaven as long as the dress is still missing,” the nymph said as she burst in tears, no longer able to hold them.

“Then, what should we do?” asked the mother bewildered.

“I will go with whatever you decide, Ma’am, Sir,” Dedari answered briefly.

“This is not a trivial matter, but a matter of life,” replied the father, still dumbfounded.

“Huh, a matter of life?” asked Betawol nervously.

“Yes, a matter of life! The life of your friend is at stake,” snapped the father.

“What’s your friend’s name again?” the mother asked gently.

“Dedari, Ma’am!” the young nymph replied in a whisper.

“Well, you can see now how we all live poorly,” said the mother humbly.

“Yes, Ma’am! I understand,” said Dedari cautiously.

“Very well. Now, you must decide whether to stay or leave,” asked Betawol firmly.

“Whatever happens, I will stay here,” Dedari answered resignedly.

“If that is what you want, you can live here. But, you see, we are quite poor,” said the mother.

“It’s fine, Ma’am. Thank you. I gladly receive your offer,” Dedari answered firmly.

Dedari had only been living for a few days at Betawol’s house, but she already attracted people’s attention and became the subject of talk among Betawol’s neighbors. The young man’s house soon got crowded with villagers who were mostly curious with Princess Dedari and wanted to see how beautiful the much talked about nymph was. Every day, more and more people flocked into his house. In fact, some even travelled down there from a very far country. All of the commotion eventually forced the village elder to step in and come to his house.

“*Assalamualaikum*¹!” greeted the village elder who was often called Dato.

“*Walaikum salam!*” replied Betawol’s father as he hurried to open the door.

“Please come in, Dato!” welcomed Betawol’s mother.

¹ Islamic greetings, meaning may peace be upon you

“What brings you here, Dato? It’s still early in the morning!” said the father, not less friendly than the mother.

“I heard there’s a young woman staying here?” Dato asked cautiously.

“That’s right, Dato. We have meant to report to you, but we have not had the time,” said the father carefully.

“You should have reported about her stay to me soon. I was waiting for you to come see me, but you never did,” Dato replied.

“My apology, Dato. We have been exhausted for the past few days,” replied the mother, still defending herself.

“What have you been doing that makes you so exhausted? It seems that you have been very busy lately!” said Dato, probing.

“Nothing in particular actually!” denied the father.

“Well, we’re exhausted from being bombarded by guests coming from different villages who want to meet the young lady,” replied the mother honestly.

“Fine, then. In this case, as the elder of this village, can I give my opinion?” Dato asked, asserting his authority.

“Please! It’s our pleasure,” replied the father politely.

“Actually, for someone to stay at someone else’s house is not a problem,” Dato said, not less politely.

“Then what’s the problem?” asked Betawol.

“The problem is the one who stays here is a young woman,” Dato said gently.

“Then, why should that be of a problem?” Betawol further asked.

“The problem is that the young woman is staying in the house of a young man,” Dato explained gently.

“Then what’s the problem, really?” inquired Betawol, still not quite understood.

“The real problem is that a young woman and a young man who are not *muhrim*² are not allowed to live in the same house,” replied the elder unequivocally.

“We sleep in different rooms,” Dedari said sheepishly.

“I see. I can understand then. But, the people out there must have their own opinion,” Dato explained.

² Indonesian naturalization of *mahram*, meaning an unmarriageable kin with whom marriage/sexual intercourse would be considered illegal in Islam

“The important thing is we sleep in separate rooms,” argued Betawol.

”But people do not know about that, and because they don’t know what is really happening, they have created a ruckus over this matter,” Dato argued furiously.

“Is that true? So, someone has spread false rumors about us?” Dedari asked gloomily.

“Not just one person, but many people have been now talking bad about you two!” Dato replied shortly.

“Therefore, if you like each other, you both should get married,” advised Dato the village elder.

“What do you think?” the old man asked again.

“It’s up to them,” said Betawol’s father and mother almost simultaneously.

“What about you, Dedari? Are you willing to be married to Betawol?” asked the village elder.

“I have no other choice because to return to heaven is impossible without the nymph’s dress,” Dedari answered resignedly.

“If Mom and Dad agree, I will be willing to,” said Betawol, looking at his parents.

“As long as you like it, I will give you my blessing,” the father said gently.

“I give you my blessing, too, as long as you both are sincerely willing to get married,” the mother added.

“If you do not get married, one of you must get out of this house,” Dato the village elder warned.

“I can’t get out of my own house,” said Betawol with a gloomy face.

“I can’t leave this house, either. I have no one else on Earth besides this family,” said Dedari with a helpless face.

“Then, with the blessing of both parents and approval from me as the village elder, you two will soon marry,” said Dato, relieved.

The appointed day arrived. Betawol and Dedari were married by Dato the village elder according to the local customs. They had a solemn wedding ceremony, and the *iraw/birau* (party) was very festive. The guests looked happy, enjoying the traditional dishes and the melody of traditional gamelan.

Nine months after the marriage, Dedari and Betawol were gifted with a baby boy whose handsome face surpassed that of his father. Since married to Dedari, Betawol had also gained wealth. The family lived prosperously and never lacked anything.

The rice in their barn was always abundant, as if not a single grain had been used for their meal. Although, of course, the rice was consumed daily. Betawol had even become so rich and famous that many people came to his house to see themselves his wealth and also his beautiful wife. Since more and more people came to his house, Betawol had often thrown *iraw*, thanksgiving parties, for seven days and seven nights.

After the rice harvest, Betawol threw an *iraw* again. The party was also to celebrate the birth of his child. He was previously too busy to hold the celebration. The people came flocking to his house to attend the party. The music was lively, and the food was plentiful. Everyone who came was full of joy. During the party, Betawol introduced his wife to the guests. Many guests were surprised to see how Dedari had grown even more beautiful than she already was.

The guests requested that Dedari dance for them. The lady refused to dance. However, Betawol insisted that she granted their request.

Betawol wanted to show his wife off to his guests. He wanted them to see that his wife was not only beautiful but also good at dancing.

Time and again the wife refused her husband's request to dance, but many times also Betawol forced his wife to do so. Finally,

Dedari resigned to Betawol's request on one condition that she wore her once-lost dress.

"My husband, I am willing to dance, but there is one condition," pleaded Dedari.

"What is the condition? Tell me," Betawol responded defiantly.

"I will dance as long as I wear my favorite dress that I lost in the woods," Dedari pleaded with a gloomy face.

"Well, I will grant your request," said Betawol quickly, feeling challenged.

Betawol dismissed himself for a moment. He headed for the rice granary. Removing some of the rice on top of a cloth as quickly as possible, he then pulled the cloth on which the rice was stacked and brought it to his wife. The cloth was actually Dedari's lost dress.

"My wife, this is your lost dress," said Betawol firmly.

"Why do you have this dress with you?" she asked in a trembling voice.

"Well, I have been keeping this dress," said Betawol lightly.

"Where did you get it?" asked the wife with tears in her eyes.

"From the bank of the lake," replied Betawol honestly.

“So, you are the one who has been hiding my dress,” said Dedari, bursting in tears.

“That’s right. But, it’s no use crying over spilt milk. What’s done can’t be undone. We can’t do anything,” said Betawol obliviously.

“Okay, I’ll wear this dress,” Dedari said with a cloudy face.

Dedari hurriedly put on the dress. Then, she returned to the middle of the invited guests. Just as she had promised to Betawol, she danced for the guests. The sound of gamelan then pierced the air.

Dedari danced gracefully. The music grew quicker and quicker, and the dance grew faster in pace that Dedari’s feet began to slowly lift off the ground, getting higher and higher off, until finally her head touched the roof.

“Goodbye, my husband,” Dedari said, barely audibly.

“No, my wife! I don’t want to be apart from you,” replied Betawol in a quavering voice.

“No, my husband! We do have to part,” Dedari said softly.

“No way! We can’t be separated!” argued Betawol.

“Now our worlds are different,” Dedari answered gently.

“What’s different now? We have been living together without any differences,” Betawol argued.

“You are a creature of Earth, while I am a creature of heaven,” Dedari replied firmly.

“But all this time we could live together just fine,” argued Betawol.

“Still, I must return to my home,” Dedari asserted.

“No, you can’t go back there,” Betawol argued more fiercely.

“No one can stop me,” Dedari said.

“What about our child?” Betawol said as he continued wiping his wet eyes.

“It’s impossible for me to bring our son because his world is different from mine,” Dedari explained.

“But he still needs you very much,” begged Betawol.

“I know that, but we can’t be together,” Dedari replied with a flush.

“The little boy will miss you,” said Betawol, getting weaker.

“I will also miss both of you,” said Dedari with wet eyes.

“That’s why, don’t go,” said Betawol, still trying to prevent Dedari from leaving.

“I have to go. The time has come. Goodbye my husband, and give my love and kisses for my son,” said Dedari while continuing to float in the sky.

The invited guests stormed towards Betawol. Meanwhile, Betawol ran and continued to follow Dedari’s trail in the sky until he reached Mount Batu³.

Dedari hovered over the rocky mountain, and Betawol was still following her at the feet of the mountain. Focusing too much on his quest to catch up with Dedari, Betawol did not even realize that he had been holding an ax in his hand. Once he noticed the ax, he then used it to tread Mount Batu until it was tapered at the bottom.

Betawol then realized that his wife would really return to heaven. While rubbing the tears flowing down from the corners of his eyes, Betawol continued to run after his wife who continued to drift toward the center of Mount Batu in the Tawau region, Sabah, precisely in what is today’s border of Indonesia and Malaysia.

Arriving at the mountain, Betawol begged Dedari to forgive him and to come down and return to him. Having his request denied

³ Literally means Rocky Mountain

by Dedari, Betawol was angry and continued to tread the rocks until the mountain became completely pointed at the bottom and its top collapsed. Betawol still refused to let go of his wife.

“Go home, my husband! Don’t you keep following me,” Dedari began to get annoyed.

“I will always follow you no matter what,” said Betawol breathlessly.

“After this, you will no longer be able to follow me,” Dedari replied.

“Why is that so?” asked Betawol with a stupid face.

“Because I’m going to be really gone and disappear out of your sight,” Dedari said with wet eyes.

“Well then, is there anything you would like to say to our son?”

“Please take care and teach him to become a useful person for others,” pleaded Dedari, wiping the stream of tears gushing from the corners of her eyes.

“I will,” said Betawol with red eyes.

“Dad! Dad! Where is Mom?” all of a sudden Betawol’s son could be heard shouting.

“Your mother is in the sky, honey,” replied Betawol, holding back his tears.

“Which sky, Dad?” the boy asked curiously.

“On top of the rainbow,” replied the father briefly.

“Dad, I will get grandfather and grandmother to take me to Mom,” the boy said innocently, not really understanding of what was going on.

“My child, take care of yourself,” said Dedari, as she descended from the sky for a moment and hugged her son.

“All right, Mom,” the boy said spontaneously.

“Listen to your father, grandmother, and grandfather. Be respectful to them,” Dedari said with teary eyes.

“All right, Mom!” replied the boy again.

“Soon the full moon will arrive. At that time, the nymphs will descend to Earth. If you want to meet me, take our beloved son to the mouth of Sibuku River, between Sumbol River and Tidong Patag, but a week before the full moon you have to prepare a throne for our meeting place, so that I know where you and your son are,” Dedari told Betawol.

The specified time arrived. Betawol prepared the throne for his wife. The wife, along with the six nymphs who were her siblings, arrived through the seven rainbow staircases. When they arrived, seven waves came carrying the shadow of his wife that could be seen in the middle of the river. Seeing that, Betawol together with his son plunged into the middle of the river and headed towards the shadow. The seven waves crashed them down, followed by a terrible earthquake. Betawol lost his life. However, by permission of God the Almighty his son was safe.

Growing up, the son of Betawol married the local woman until they gave birth to children who would be the forerunners or the natives of the Tidung Sibuku ethnic. To commemorate the male ancestor of the Tidung Sibuku ethnic, namely Yaki Betawol or Aki Betawol, which means Grandfather Betawol, and to commemorate their female ancestor, Dedari or Bidadari Bungsu (the last of the seven siblings), a written record of the origin of Tidung Sibuku was made, and even a poem titled “Putri Batu”⁴ was once written based on the story.

⁴ Literally means Stone Princess