

**THE TALE OF THREE PRINCES**  
*Kisah Tiga Pangeran*

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## THE TALE OF THREE PRINCES

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## A TALE OF THREE PRINCES

Once upon a time, there was a king who had three sons. The eldest son's name was Rhaden, the second Kiemas, and the third Fayyadh. The three sons were always cheerful. Their bodies were healthy and strong, attracting admiration and pleasure of those beholding them. As the days turned into months and months into years, the three princes grew into teenagers. On a bright morning, just as the sun displayed its golden shining lights on the graceful earth and the birds chirped and tweeted cheerfully, welcoming the new day, the three princes were happily chatting while enjoying *rujak* (fruit salad in thick sweet chily paste) under a mango tree, laden with fruits. Rhaden, the oldest of the three, started the conversation by posing a question in a serious tone.

“Brothers, we are king's sons, but we don't have much knowledge and experience. If our father passes away, who will succeed him?” asked Rhaden.

“Isn't the successor the oldest of the children, and that's you?” replied Kiemas with another question.

“My brothers, a sovereign shouldn't be enthroned only based on the lineage, but he should also possess knowledge and experience so that the people under his sovereignty may live in peace and prosperity,” Rhaden explained to his younger brothers.

“So, what do you mean?” asked Kiemas rather perplexed.

“I mean, we all deserve to succeed father as the next king based on our knowledge, wisdom, and justice that each of us possesses,” replied Rhaden, then he continued, “Therefore, we had better start from now to seek knowledge and experience as much as possible for this kingdom’s development in the future.”

“You’re right, but how should we seek knowledge?” asked Kiemas.

“And also experience?” added Fayyadh.

“That’s what we have to think about from now. Otherwise, if we don’t prepare ourselves well in advance, we will regret later,” Rhaden tried to explain what he meant by his question.

“Do you, Rhaden or Fayyadh, have any idea? As for me, I have none, because I’d never thought about it before,” said Kiemas.

“Let’s think it over together, brothers,” said Rhaden. The three started thinking about the matter and suddenly the silence was broken by Fayyadh’s happy exclamation.

“I have a proposal, older brothers. What about travelling overseas?” Fayyadh’s voice broke the silence. Rhaden and Kiemas, who were thinking seriously, jerked and exchanged look with brows furrowing.

“Isn’t the plan too bombastic, younger brother?” asked Kiemas.

“Well ... Yes,” said Fayyadh. After a moment of silence, he continued, “But surely we will get more knowledge and experience in a larger variety compared to learning in our locality, won’t we?”

“True, and I’m also interested in the idea and would like to travel to a foreign land, but will our father and mother consent to our wish?” said Kiemas.

“Travelling abroad will surely increase our knowledge, and extend our worldview. I also agree with you, Fayyadh. To know whether or not our father and mother consent to our wish, let’s ask them,” said Rhaden.

“Agree ...,” said Kiemas and Fayyadh altogether. The three brothers agreed to tell their parents of their intention. After breakfast, Rhaden, Kiemas, and Fayyadh came to their father and mother who were sitting on the throne accompanied by two maids and some royal dignitaries. Rhaden started the conversation by asking for permission to talk about an important matter.

“Do proceed, my sons,” said the king.

“We beg your pardon, Your Majesty, Father and Mother. We are sons of the king, but we are still lack of knowledge to be sovereigns in the future. If you kindly grant us permission, we

would like to travel to foreign lands to seek knowledge and experience,” said Rhaden. The king and the queen listened silently and attentively.

The king asked the queen, “What do you think about it, my dear wife? Will you allow them to travel abroad to seek knowledge and experience?”

After a moment of silence, the queen replied, “If the intention is to become better persons, I don’t see why we shouldn’t consent to it.”

“All right, then. As you have reached your teenage, you can distinguish the good from the bad for your future life. Go, find knowledge for your future. I have been old, and you will be the ones to succeed me later,” said the king. Night came engulfing the earth with darkness, and the crescent beautified the dark night, accompanied by the twinkling stars. From that night on, the three brothers prepared themselves for the journey they were going to undertake to foreign lands. They started packing their clothes and provisions they would bring. Night was getting late. As they were ready to go to bed and take rest, and the lamps had been put out, suddenly their room door was opened. Apparently, their parents came visiting their room. The three princes delayed their sleep and lit the lamps. The king and the queen hugged their sons emotionally. The queen said, “Before you set agoing, I’d like to tell you a bedtime story for the last time ....”

“Thank you, dear Mother. We’ll be very happy to listen to your stories before we sleep,” the three princes sat around their mother happily.

“All right, my beloved sons. This story tells about the friendship of a frog, a bug, and a bird,” said their mother starting her story, while the sounds of crickets were heard, responding to one another. Then, their mother continued her story:

The frog family lived on a lake. One day, a group of elephants passed the place where the frog family lived. As a result, many of the frogs’ eggs were broken and many of the frogs’ children were dead, thumped by the passing elephants. The frogs were very angry with the elephants. The frog king had a consultation with the other frogs. They were noisily expressing their sadness for what had happened to the kingdom of frogs.

“Alas!” said the frog queen, “How can we take revenge for the elephants’ deed? We are small and we don’t have weapons, so what should we do?”

“I can’t stand sitting idly,” said the frog king, “You stay here, treat the wounded, bury the dead, and keep protecting one another. I will go killing the elephant. I’d rather die than be disgraced.”

The frog king had made up his mind. He was determined to kill any elephants which had killed the frogs’ kids. He followed the

elephants' trails. A group of elephants do not walk separately, but they walk in line led by their leader on the forefront.

The frog king said, "I will kill the elephant king, because I am the frog king."

The elephants walked quickly, while the frog king hopped slowly following the elephants. On the way, he met a crying bug.

"Why are you crying, bug?" asked the frog king.

"O, Frog. Look at our children and eggs. All our children and our eggs on the fallen trees are dead and broken, thumped by the elephants," replied the bug.

"So, why are you just crying?" asked the frog king.

"Well, what else can we do?" replied the bug sadly.

"Nah!" said the frog king. "Follow me. Let's kill the elephant king," the frog invited the bug to join him.

"Blimey! How will we kill the big elephant while we are this small?" replied the bug hesitantly.

"Come on! Aren't you sad thinking about your dead children due to the elephants' carelessness?" said the frog.

"Of course we are, frog," said the bug. "Okay, I'm in."



“Well, bug. Fly and follow the elephants, watch them,” said the frog.

So the bug flew away, but after a few moments, he returned.

“Where are they up to?” asked the frog.

“Very ... Very far away,” said the bug.

“Keep following them, don’t miss them. I’m surely following you,” said the frog.

Suddenly, on the way, the bug met a small bird, a *mersan* bird. *Mersan* birds live in groups with their family, sometimes five to six members. The bird was crying so much that his feathers were wet with his tears. The bug asked the reason of his weeping.

“All my children are dead, thumped by the elephants, and our nests are such a mess,” replied the bird, who lived in the bush, and asked, “And you, what’s up with you and where are you heading?”

” We have the same fate. All my children are dead, thumped by the elephants, and so are the frog’s. He has invited me to kill the elephant, giving a lesson to the careless elephants. The frog is coming shortly.”

After a short moment, the frog came hopping, and asked the bird, “Why are you crying, *mersan* bird?”

“My children are dead, thumped by the elephants,” replied the bird.

“Well, then. Let’s go killing the elephant,” invited the frog. So the bird and the bug flew, following the elephants’ trail, and the frog hopped faster. After about half a month, they managed to catch up with the elephants.

“Well,” said *mersan* bird, “Have a closer look, frog. Tell me if the elephants have been asleep on the large, grassy mound.”

The bug looked at the frog, “Come on, frog. Be quick, the elephants have been asleep.”

The frog hopped at once towards the lying elephants.

“Look,” said the bug, “The elephant with the biggest and the longest tusks is the king.”

The *mersan* bird said, “Well, if I perch on one of them, that will be the king.”

Obviously, the elephant king slept in the middle of the group. The frog hopped from one elephant to the others until he reached the back of the king. Then he told the bug and the bird of his plan.

“My friends ...,” said the frog briefing his comrades, “We three should not separate; rather, we should protect one another. I’m going to enter this elephant’s belly, and you should wait. Before I

go out, never leave this elephant, keep watching him. Let's swear that we will wait until the elephant king is dead."

So, they swore, uniting their hands.

"The sky and the earth will be our witnesses," said the bug, "Whoever leaves and returns before this work is over is a traitor."

The others nodded in agreement. Then the frog said, "This is the plan. When this elephant walks, follow him. Wherever he goes and until however long he endures, I will remain in his belly. *Mersan*, listen to my instruction, and keep me informed of his condition through his ears. And bug, to make sure he is dead, your duty is to sting his eyes."

"Won't you die out of hunger in his belly?" asked the *mersan* bird.

"That's easy, I'll never be hungry. I will eat his guts, I won't die out of hunger," said the frog. Then the frog entered the elephant's body through his anus. He kept going further into the deeper part of the elephant's belly. After some time, the elephant's belly got upset because the frog kept making trouble inside, and after several months, the elephant was dying. The *mersan* bird, who stayed on the elephant's earlobe, started to feel the symptom that the elephant was dying because the elephant was moving less and less. Besides, unpleasant smell started to emanate from the elephant's body. The bird remembered the frog's instruction that

to make sure the elephant was dead, the bug had to sting the elephant's eyes. So, the *mersan* bird told the bug to sting the elephant's eye. As the elephant's eyes did not wink when one was stung, they were sure they the elephant had been dead.

"I have smelled rotten smell from this elephant's body. Now, what?" asked the *mersan* bird.

"Then, we have to inform the frog," said the bug.

"Frog ... Frog!" shouted the bug, "Can you hear me?"

"Someone is calling me," mumbled the frog in the belly of the elephant. He listened attentively, "Well, that's the bug's voice."

"Frog ...! Frog! Can you hear me?" shouted the bug repeatedly.

"Yes ... Yes, bug!" replied the frog.

"Get out of there. The elephant's dead!" said the bug.

The frog hopped out from the elephant's belly, meeting the bug and the *mersan* bird, who were waiting anxiously. The frog said cheerfully, "Well done, guys!" They hugged one another with satisfaction because they had given a lesson to the elephant which had killed their children.

"Our children's death has been avenged. Now, let's go home," said the frog to his two friends. Then they returned together. As

they reached the *mersan* bird's place, they separated. The *mersan* bird occupied his nest again. Before they parted, they promised to one another that they would advise one another as a lesson to be learned by their descendants and by human. The frog gave his advice:

“I would like to advise ourselves with an advice that we three should keep and the human should also keep: Because we live on the dyke, not in the field, when dry season comes and humans do not want to plant rice due to the drought, I will make them hear my voice at the dusk, after the sunset. I will do it about three dusks. Even if there is no rain, still they have to plant rice, because it will surely rain.”

“So, what about you?” the frog asked the bug and the *mersan* bird.

The bug replied, “I also have an advice: If I fly around a house or a hut at night, whether in a hamlet, in a garden, or in a village, it's a sign that the inhabitants will experience a great calamity. So if they want to give alms or invite guests to a banquet, then they should do so. They should pray to the Almighty to be saved from the calamity. That's when I fly around the house at night. What about you, *mersan*?”

“When the sun is about to set, we, the whole family, will fly up and down chirping. That's the sign of an imminent whirlwind. So,

should there be brittle or dead tree, fell it at once, lest it should crumble upon the house,” said the *mersan* bird.

And by that, the queen ended her story. The three princes listened to their mother’s story attentively and happily without any sign of tiredness. Perhaps because that was supposed to be last story they could hear from their beloved and loving mother prior to leaving to foreign lands the following day.

“My sons, what moral can you learn from the story?” asked their mother.

“We have to keep the unity and we have to choose a leader in this journey whose directions we have to follow,” answered Rhaden.

“We have to keep united, because even the weakest will be strong if they are united,” replied Kiemas.

“We have to think and act according to a well-planned strategy so that our goal may be achieved easily,” replied Fayyadh.

“Great. All answers are well grounded and stated,” said their mother with an emotional smile. The king nodded his head and said to his three sons, “My sons! Your mother and I are happy to see you think for the future of this kingdom. We request you to maintain your chastity and honesty, and to think and act carefully. Be alert and keep unity among yourselves.”

The following morning, they look leave from their beloved parents. Each of them was given a can of coins. As the oldest of the three, Rhaden took the responsibility of leading the journey. The three brothers set out to undertake their journey, entering and exiting jungles, ascending and descending mounts, crossing rivers and fields. Three months had passed, and they had left their father's kingdom quite far.

On one place, they came to a crossroad: one went straight, another turned right, and the other turned left. They stopped there. "Let's take a rest here and continue our journey tomorrow," said Rhaden, which was agreed by his two brothers. The following morning, when the sun appeared shyly from behind the mountains, the three brothers had woken up from their sound sleep. When they were ready to continue their journey, Rhaden invited his brothers to discuss their journey under a shady tree.

He said, "My beloved brothers, we have covered quite a long distance from home. But if we continue our journey on the same route to the same destination, if we don't meet any teacher, we all won't get a lesson. On the other hand, if we meet one, we will get the same knowledge. So, we have to separate here, and each of us will take a different direction. We have to decide who will turn right, who will turn left, and who will go straight!"

His two brothers agreed, and he continued, "As the oldest, I'll let you choose first."

“I agree with whatever you choose for us,” said Kiemas.

“No, you choose for your choice first. I’ll have the last,” said Rhaden.

“I have an idea, brothers. What if Rhaden takes the right turn, Kiemas goes straight, and I take the left?” said Fayyadh.

“That will do. So, let’s get apart here. We will separate for five years. We will reunite here again; this crossroad will be our rendezvous. Whoever comes first shall wait for the others,” said Rhaden.

“All right,” said his younger brothers.

There and then they separated. Rhaden took the right turn, Kiemas went straight, and Fayyadh took the left turn. They went through cogon fields, thick bushes, rivers and villages. After one month, at the border of a kingdom, when roosters crowed as a sign of the coming of dawn, Rhaden took a rest and sat down. Suddenly he caught the sight of a white figure coming closer. When the figure was very close, Rhaden could see that he was an old man in white clothes. Rhaden greeted the old man, “Excuse me, grandpa. Could you tell me the name of this place?” asked Rhaden.

The old man replied, “Oh, son. This is a place where people come to seek Islamic knowledge from a great scholar. You are



lucky to come here. Around here, you will find religious people. They perform prayers punctually, recite Quran, seek Islamic knowledge and do good deeds. They are obedient to the Almighty's injunctions under the guidance of the scholar."

"Well, then, grandpa. Could you then show me the way to the scholar's house that I may learn from him and do good, too," requested Rhaden.

"All right. If that is your wish, then follow me," said the old man.

Rhaden followed the old man, who took him to meet the scholar. He was impressed by the beauty, tranquility, and simplicity of the house. It was also very clean. As he came, he could smell the fresh fragrance of flowers welcoming him. The door was opened, and he could see the rugs on the floor inside the house, so comfortable to sit on.

Rhaden met the scholar and said, "Your Holiness, would you be so kind to accept me as your disciple?" So saying, Rhaden presented the coins he brought with him.

"If you wish to learn from me, you have to fulfill the requirements," said the scholar.

"Whatever the requirements are, I submit myself to fulfill them, Your Holiness," said Rhaden submissively.

“You have to be honest and behave yourself well, and follow all my teachings and examples. If I tell you to study, you have to study; if you are told to pray, you must pray; in short, obey all my orders without hesitation.”

“Insha Allah, I am willing to fulfill the requirements, Your Holiness,” said Rhaden earnestly. So, Rhaden started learning seriously, and after five years, he had mastered all which have been taught by the scholar, even he excelled his teacher. He even acquired a special ability, telling what other people in different places did. He could even see what his parents were doing at the moment. That showed how much he had acquired from his learning. He was named *Kiai Pangeran* (The Scholar Prince) by the other seekers of knowledge there, yet he maintained humbleness and far from arrogance. Although he had acquired much more than his own teacher, he still followed his teacher’s teachings. As for Kiemas, after a month’s journey, he came to a beautiful kingdom. The roads were tidy, the houses were beautiful, and all seemed to have been built with a very careful planning. He was very impressed by what he saw. He stood admiring the beautiful kingdom. When a boy playing with a yoyo passed in front of him, he stopped him and asked, “Young boy, do you live around here?”

“Yes,” replied the boy.

“The houses here are very beautiful,” said Kiemas admiringly.

“That’s maybe because this kingdom is the learning centre for all types of carpentry work.

“Oh ... No wonder! Thank you for your information, my boy,” said Kiemas. He thought that was the sort of thing he was looking for, so he made up his mind to learn carpentry. Along the way, he observed the people working hard. He strolled along the streets and on a certain corner, he saw a plank with a neat writing “Outstanding Creativity Workshop”, learning centre for all carpentry skills.

“Yes! This is the best place to get what I’m looking for,” said Kiemas to himself, “I want to learn here.”

Kiemas entered the place and found everybody busy with their own work, making all sorts of furniture. He met the owner of the workshop.

“Teacher, allow me to learn carpentry here,” said Kiemas presenting all the money he brought.

“Good,” said the owner, “This is a good place to learn.”

From that day on, Kiemas learned carpentry. He learned so seriously that after some time, he excelled his own teacher.

He was such a good carpenter that if it took forty people to build a house in forty days, he could finish only in seven days. This was a good skill to develop his country. Nobody could excell him in

carpentry that he was named The Carpenter Prince. After five years staying in that kingdom, he took leave to return to his own. As for Fayyadh who took the left turning, he traversed jungles, crossed fields of cogon and rivers, ascended and descended hills and mounts. At one place, he heard the faint sound of crowing roosters, music responding to each other, human voices chatting and laughing, and he also smelled delicious foods. It sounded like there was a party and banquet of certain kind. That was also the sign of a nearby village and community where he hoped to seek knowledge.

“Yes, this means that I am getting closer to a human habitation,” he mumbled to himself. He took a rest while observing his surroundings and hoping to meet passers by whom he could ask about the locality. What an unexpected luck. From a distance he saw the coming of a man carrying a rooster with spurs on its legs. Fayyadh approached the man and asked, “Excuse me, uncle. May I ask you questions?”

“Well, of course ...,” said the man suspiciously observing Fayyadh, “What do you want to know?”

“I want to know what the people here do for their living, and what the name of this country is,” asked Fayyadh enthusiastically.

“Hmmm .... Well, young man. The people here make a living from gambling, having cockfights, and robbing other people. This

is Robbers' Den. You shouldn't enter this village. It's not good for your future. So, you'd better go home now," explained the man.

"Well ..., uncle. I can't go home yet. I left home to seek knowledge and experience. Even if I am to become a gambler, I am willing to learn. I'm embarrassed to return without success!"

"Ah .... Well, but don't regret it if you have entered this village," said the man.

"I am only seeking knowledge, uncle. Would you kindly introduce me to the head of this village?"

"All right, if that's your determination, follow me," said the man.

"Thank you, uncle," said Fayyadh following the man. Fayyadh was led to the house of the robbers' gang leader.

When he entered the village, he saw that the houses' walls were made from bamboo and the roofs were made from mangrove leaves, a sign of the poverty of the inhabitants.

"Well .... This is the house of the leader of the gang, who rules this village," said the man while pointing to the biggest house around the village.

"Thank you, uncle. If you wish to continue your journey, do so ...." Fayyadh had not finished his words when the man had

already disappeared. With firm steps, Fayyadh entered the house and personally met the leader. He expressed his intention to learn from the leader and presented his can of coins. The gang leader did not mind accepting Fayyadh to learn from him. After five years of learning, Fayyadh had mastered the science of all crimes, to the extent that he had excelled his teacher. He was given the title The Robber Prince. Remembering his promise of five-year learning, he took leave to return to his homeland. Rhaden had waited since a day earlier by the crossroad they had promised. Kiemas and Fayyadh arrived at about the same time. The happily hugged one another as they were reunited again on the rendezvous. As the oldest, Rhaden asked Kiemas, “What did you learn for five years, brother?”

“Well, not bad, brother,” replied he, “I learned to be a carpenter. I can virtually make all types of big and beautiful houses. What about yourself?”

“I learn from a great scholar. Alhamdulillah, I learnt Islamic knowledge.”

“What about you, Fayyadh?” Rhaden asked Fayyadh.

“Ah .... I had a bad luck. I didn’t learn Islamic knowledge like you, neither did I learn carpentry like Kiemas. I didn’t learn beneficial knowledge.”

Rhaden said, “Hey .... Tell us honestly. I can tell whatever our father was doing, let alone what you did,” said Rhaden. Apparently, due to his great knowledge, he could see his brother’s learning.

“Well, brother, all right. I had a bad luck. I came to the village of the Robbers’ Den. They are robbers, gamblers, thieves, and bandits. In short, they do all sorts of crimes,” said Fayyadh.

“Well, that means that you learnt something and that you didn’t waste the coins. So, let’s go home now,” said Rhaden.

Fayyadh replied at once, “No, brothers. I don’t want to return without a can of coins.”

“You can’t do that, brother. We have to go home. Although we don’t bring money with us, but we have acquired some knowledge.”

“I don’t get beneficial knowledge, so I have to return father’s money,” insisted Fayyadh.

“Our father won’t mind, and I’m responsible for that,” assured Rhaden.

After a long argument, Rhaden and Kiemas managed to persuade Fayyadh to go home with them. On the way, they came across a T-junction, one to the right and one to the left. “Well, brothers,

you take the right turning, and let take the one to the left,” said Fayyadh.

“Brother, the left one goes to the robbers’ route, let’s take the right one leading to our home,” said Rhaden.

“No, I want to go to the left,” so saying, Fayyadh took the left turn. Seeing their youngest brother taking the left turn, Rhaden and Kiemas felt anxious and unwilling to separate from their brother again, so they followed Fayyadh.

After about a hundred meters, they met a gang of robbers.

“Hey, who are you? How dare you come to our area!” said one of the robbers. They captured the three brothers without resistance and imprisoned them. Actually Rhaden had been aware of what would happen to them, but he preferred accompanying his brothers because he was the leader of the other two.

“What do you want?” asked the leader.

“We like eating,” said Rhaden.

“All right, we will provide something to eat for you,” said the leader. Because Rhaden knew what would happen the next day, he told his brothers, “Brothers, tomorrow, the gang leader will tell us to eat. So, eat only whatever I eat. If I don’t eat it, don’t eat it.”



“All right,” said his two brothers. The following morning, at about eight o’clock, the meal had been prepared. The gang leader sat on the chair observing them. Rhaden could tell that the meal was miscellaneous; some were *halal* (lawful) food, while some others were *haram* (unlawful). The three brothers were invited to enjoy the meal. Kiemas took a knife and would start cutting the nearest meat had he not been warned by Rhaden.

“No, brother. I have told you not to eat what I don’t eat. That’s unlawful meat.”

The gang leader was observing attentively; whoever took unlawful meat, he would behead him at once. So the two younger brothers followed their oldest brother. If he took what was on the right plate, they would take it; likewise, if he took the food on the left plate, they would follow his example.

The gang leader asked, “How did you find the food? Is it delicious?”

Rhaden replied, “Indeed it is. Unfortunately, the cook of this meal cannot read and count, while the leader of this place has got a defect in his knowledge.”

The gang leader was very angry, “No! That is certainly not true!”

“Well, if it is untrue, now ask yourself: Isn’t it true that the leader here has a defect in his knowledge?”

The gang leader was enraged and his face turned red with anger. He took the three brothers to a room. There were only the four of them in the room. Half whispering, the gang leader asked Rhaden, "If you know my defect, tell me what it is!"

"Your weakness lies in your hair. If your hair is cut, your defect increases. The more your hair is cut, the more your defect increases," replied Rhaden with certainty.

Hearing Rhaden's answer, the face of the gang leader turned pale. He went inside his room, and after some time, returned with three cans full of coins.

"These are three cans full of coins, one for each of you. Please keep your mouth shut, do not tell anybody. Now you may go home," said the gang leader.

So the three brothers left the place and came to the crossroad of their rendezvous. Fayyadh said to his two brothers, "Please go home, brothers. I'll just wait here."

"No, brother. Now we have got three cans of coins, one for each. You said that you wouldn't go home without a can of coins, and now we have got it. So, let's go home."

After some more arguments, Fayyadh gave in, and followed his two older brothers. When they reached the border of their kingdom, they took a rest. As they saw some passers by, they told

them to inform the king that the three princes had returned to the kingdom and would reach the palace after a short time. Their message was conveyed, and the news about their return was heard by the people in the kingdom, so everybody welcomed them. When they reached the palace, Rhaden said to his two brothers, “You two, go first, meet father and mother. I’ll be waiting here outside.”

Fayyadh said, “No. As the oldest, it is you who should go first.”

Rhaden agreed and they all entered the palace. After saluting their parents duly, they sat in front of their parents. The king asked Rhaden, “So, what have you learned for the last five years, my son, Rhaden?”

“Alhamdulillah, I went to the land of scholars. The people there are very religious. They pray, learn the Islamic knowledge and practice it. I am lucky to have learned all knowledge taught from the land.”

“That is good, my son. Now you may go and have a rest,” said his father.

When Kiemas’ turn came, his father asked him, “What about you, Kiemas? What have you learned for the last five years?”

Kemas replied, “Aye, indeed something great which makes me a great son, father. I learned to make all types of houses and

wooden furniture, and I can make them well. Invite forty well known carpenters, and I am ready to outdo them.”

His father responded, “Wow, you sound great as well as boastful! All right, we’ll see to it. Now you may go and have a rest.”

When it was Fayyadh’s turn to meet his father, he trembled with fear. He was scared fancying what he would tell his father. He gathered all his courage, came to his father’s presence, put the can of coins, and started to run away.

“Hey, Fayyadh, wait! Where are you going? Sit down, and let’s talk. Don’t just leave the coins and run away. Now, sit down here!”

Fayyadh sat down, obeying his father’s order. “Tell me, what did you learn in your five year learning in the foreign lands?” asked his father.

“I am sorry, Father. I learned nothing in the course of five years,” replied Fayyaddh.

“No, Fayyadh. You’d better tell me the truth. I won’t be angry,” said his father.

Fayyad confessed, “Well, Father. I was very unlucky to have entered the Robbers’ Den. I met all sorts of rogues and criminals: robbers, bandits, thieves, gamblers, and cockfight gamblers. I’m very ashamed to tell you, Father,” said Fayyadh.

“So, you did learn something after all. The knowledge of gambling, stealing, and crimes are all knowledge. Why should you be ashamed?” said his father.

As soon as his father finished his words, Fayyadh took leave to avoid further questions. The king intended to test his sons’ achievements after they spent five years travelling to foreign lands. He wanted to test them one after the other.

“Rhaden, we are going to invite scholars from foreign lands. You will have to recite the Quran in front of different kinds of people, the learned and the illiterate, men and women, the old and the young, marrieds and singles. In short, we’ll see to it that everybody can hear you reciting the Holy Book,” said his father. The appointed day came. Rhaden started to recite the Quran beautifully. All listeners were moved, fascinated, and mesmerized by his melodious recitation. Some girls even ran to him, hugged and kissed him, but he was not in the least perturbed. With the Holy Book in his hands, he continued his recitation. He seemed to forget his surroundings, and he even forgot that *ghair-mahram* (those who are lawful to marry each other) men and women should not touch each other because it breached the ablution. He recited to the end of the part he was reciting. After all guests and audience went home with satisfaction and admiration, the king summoned Kiemas, “Now, Kiemas, it is your turn to display your skill. We will gather forty carpenters from different lands.

These are two plans for buildings. You take one, study it carefully, and be ready to make a house out of it. The other plan will be done by the forty carpenters from different lands. You have thirty days to finish it,” said the king.

“I assure you, building a house is just a piece of cake for me,” said Kiemas boastfully.

The following day, forty carpenters from different lands had gathered, ready to start their work. They started immediately, and after twenty-seven days, the house they were working on was almost ready, lacking only the main door and the windows, while Kiemas had not started at all. The king was enraged to see him sitting idly.

“Hey, Kiemas, why haven’t you started your work yet? Look at the house the carpenters are working on, it’s almost ready, only lacking the front door and windows. And you haven’t even started nailing a single nail, let alone the whole house!” said the king in anger.

“Take it easy, Father. Don’t worry,” said Kiemas.

“If you work this way, you’re just embarrassing me. If you don’t finish your house in three days, I’ll punish you severely,” threatened the king.

“All right, Father. I’ll start right away,” said Kiemas.

Kiemas started working by inviting genies which made heavy rain with flashes of lightning and claps of thunder.

Kiemas had intentionally created such situation while he was working to prevent the forty carpenters to finish their work on time due to the bad weather. Indeed, the forty carpenters could not work at all. Exactly on the thirtieth day, Kiemas finished building his house, while the house built by the forty carpenters was left with the door and the windows unfinished. The king was happy with Kiemas' skill because he did not embarrass his father with his skill. However, the king was also worried at the same time. It was true that Kiemas was a skillful carpenter, but he was arrogant in displaying his skill and liked to put off his work. Besides, he won the competition through foul play. Then it was Fayyadh's turn to show his knowledge and skill. "Fayyadh, now you have to show your gambling skill. We will invite famous gamblers, foreign as well as domestic, in a gambling competition against you."

"All right, Father," replied Fayyadh. So, a great gambling competition was held. Well known gamblers from foreign lands and from inside the kingdom took part. Nights were as bright as days throughout the kingdom, for everywhere there was gambling taking place at all time during the competition period.

"Father, could I ask for some capital? I don't ask much, because a gambler with big capital is no gambler at all," said Fayyadh.

“All right, I’ll give you thirty days to win over them all. Otherwise, you will be severely punished,” said his father.

“At your service, Father.”

So the gambling competition started, but Fayyadh did not join from the beginning. He was just observing how the gamblers did their tricks. Some gamblers were in the cockfights, some were playing cards, and some others were using dices. After keenly observing for a whole day, Fayyadh started taking part the following day. In only two days, he had won over all gamblers that many of them eventually had only their underwear. When his father saw this, he just shook his head, “It takes him only two days to win over all gamblers. What a gambler!”

The king summoned all the gamblers, “Now that you have lost everything, I’ll return whatever you have lost. Take it, go home, and gamble no more,” said the king. So they all went home without losing anything because the king had replaced all their loss.

The following day, the king summoned Fayyadh, “Fayyadh, now I assign you to steal the royal cows and kidnap the cowboys!”

When night fell, Fayyadh went to the cowshed. Some of the cowboys were sitting, while some others were sitting around the fire. He read his spell, and all the cowboys fell asleep. He mounted all the cowboys on the cows’ backs and led all the cows



to the palace frontyards, tied the cows there and let the cowboys sleep on their cows' backs. When morning came, the king was on his way to the mosque to pray the dawn prayer when he saw the cowboys on the cows' backs.

“Hey, cowboys! Why are you all here?”

The cowboys woke up and were very surprised and frightened. Many of them fell from the cows' backs and ran head over heels for fear of being reproached. Some even sprained their ankles in their effort to run. The next morning, Fayyadh was assigned to kidnap forty soldiers and their horses.

“At your service, Father!” replied Fayyadh.

When night fell, Fayyadh disguised as a girl, wearing make-up into a beautiful girl. He went to the soldiers' barracks while playing flute. When the soldiers saw him, they called him,

“Hello, sweetie! Where are you going?”

“I'm going there, to that village. I'm going to entertain them because they're having a party,” said the 'girl'.

“Come on! Entertain us first before you go there. Let's play music, dance and sing,” said the soldiers.

“All right,” said the ‘girl’. Then he played his flute, danced, and sang songs. The soldiers sang along and they partied until the night turned very late.

“Let’s have a break first. I’m going to make coffee for you. After we finish our coffee, we’ll start again,” said Fayyadh. They agreed, and he made forty-one cups of coffee. In the forty cups, he put sleeping potion and he gave the forty cups containing the sleeping potion to the forty soldiers. He himself had the cup of coffee without the potion. After the soldiers took some sips, they started to feel sleepy and could not stand sleeping. As soon as they fell asleep, he mounted the forty soldiers onto the backs of their respective horses, led the horses to the palace yard, and tied them with the sleeping soldiers on their backs.

When it was time for the dawn prayer, the king saw the forty soldiers still sleeping on their horsebacks.

“Hey soldiers! Why are you all here?” scolded the king angrily. The soldiers woke up with a start. They were very frightened as they realized where they were. Many dismounted in a hurry, many fell in the effort to escape, some of them sprained their ankles, and some others even hurt themselves with their own swords. The king felt worried and thought hard of a way to outsmart the clever Fayyadh.

That same day, the king summoned Fayyadh again. “Your test is almost accomplished. Your next task is to kidnap the old *kadi*. He stays in the attic of the tall tower which opens only once a year. The *kadi* stays there to worship devoutly.”

“All right, Father,” said Fayyadh. ‘This is a very hard test,’ said Fayyadh to himself. He went to the market to buy some chickens and ducks. He took the feathers of the chickens and the ducks and made wings for himself out of the feathers. He tried to fly with the artificial wings. Many times he failed, but he did not give up trying, until he succeeded flying with the artificial wings. At about ten o’clock at night, when it was very dark, he flew to the top of the tower. He tied a long rope to a sarong, the end of which was tied on the ground, while he carried the sarong to the top of the tower. On the top of the tower, he heard the *kadi* making supplication. Fayyadh made his voice heavy and guttural, “Hey, *kadi*. Enough with your supplication!”

“Hah? Whose voice is that?” whispered the *kadi* as he saw nobody outside. Fayyadh was hiding behind the wall.

“I am the angel of death. I am coming on God’s order to take your life,” said Fayyadh with a heavy voice.

The news scared the wit out of the *kadi*, “O, angel of death. Please postpone my death, I want to do more good deeds,” pleaded the *kadi*.

“No, I can’t do that. You can ask God by yourself. Otherwise, I’ll have to take your soul.”

The *kadi* found a new hope, “How can I do that?”

Fayyadh threw the sarong tied to the long rope to the *kadi*’s room, “Put yourself into the sarong, and I’ll take you to God.”

Without further thought, the *kadi* hunched himself into the sarong. Fayyadh took the sarong and let it down from the top of tower, swaying as it went down to the ground. Then the sarong containing the *kadi* was hung outside the door of the palace.

When the king came out from his house, his head hit the the *kadi*’s body inside the sarong. The *kadi* was very surprised as he heard the king’s voice, “What the heck is this?”

He moved inside the sarong and fell from it in front of the king and sprained his ankle.

“Hey, *kadi*! What’s up? Why are you in this state?” asked the king perplexed.

“I beg your pardon, Your Majesty! Last night the angel of death came to me to end my life. I requested him to take me to God to extend my life,” replied the *kadi* in bewilderment.

“Huh? How can you believe in such a thing? Don’t you know it was Fayyadh playing a trick on you because I assigned him to kidnap you? Where is your faith?”

The *kadi* went home greatly embarrassed. Then the king summoned Fayadh to have his last test. This time, it was the hardest.

“This is the last test. Tonight, you have to steal my blanket under which I sleep. If you fail, you have to leave this country,” said the king.

“All right, Father. Your orders are my obligation,” replied Fayyadh.

This time, Fayyadh had to be really careful. He went to the market to purchase a black goat. At night, Fayyadh sneaked while carrying the goat to the king’s room. As the king’s room was on a tilted part of the palace, Fayyadh took the goat exactly under the king’s room. The king and the queen were conversing about their three sons. The queen asked, “Why have you given Fayyadh such a hard test with such a hard punishment if he fails? Even if he has knowledge on dangerous crimes, he is still our son, nonetheless!”

“I give him such a hard test because I have a greater plan for him,” replied the king.

Just as the king finished his words, there were loud knocks from under the floor, “Dur ... dur ... dur ...!” Fayyadh knocked the floor hard with a wood log, exactly under the king’s seat. The king was very surprised and wondering, who could have such an audacity to knock the floor.

“Hey! Who is that?” shouted the king, but the knocks were getting louder.

“Dur ... dur ... dur ...!” the knocks were so hard that they shook the floor and the king’s seat.

“Who can be so insolent, disturbing the king? Do you want your head cut off?” shouted the king getting angrier. He took his sword and unsheathed it, ready to behead the intruder.

“Dur ... dur ... dur ... braaak!” the floor was broken with a big hole on the floor. Fayyadh stuck out the goat’s head through the hole on the floor from underneath. When the king saw the black head, swift as a flash, he beheaded the head. “Taste your death!” said the king.

The queen immediately took the king to the other room. She was scared and wept as she had the feeling that the knocker was none other than Fayyadh, who was intending to steal the king’s blanket. The king did not have such thought because he was so enraged by the insolent disturbing knocks. He realized it when the queen reminded him of the task that he had given to Fayyadh to

steal his own blanket. The king regretted ‘having murdered his own son’, but he could not stand seeing his own son’s beheaded head, either. As for Fayyadh, as his parents went out from their bedroom, he took his father’s blanket which was scattered on the floor. His parents did not realize that due to their panic, fear, and regret, they had left their blanket on the bedroom floor. Early morning the following day, the king issued a royal decree to beat the sign of death, the *kentongan* beaten at certain rhythms, throughout the kingdom. Everyone rushed and wondered who could have died. Some of them incidentally met Fayyadh, wearing his father’s blanket, on their way. They did not pay attention to him because they were so concerned to find out who had passed away. As they arrived at the palace yard, they asked one another, “Who has passed away that *kentongan* was beaten?”

Some who had heard earlier replied, “It’s Fayyadh. He died with his head cut off.”

“Cut off? Where? Why, but we just met him on the way here!?”

“You must be kidding!”

“No, it’s true!”

“Fayyadh had died with his head cut off last night. The king himself has beheaded him.”

“No, it can’t be. He’s still alive.”

The people who gathered quarrelled and argued with one another. Some said Fayyadh had died, some others said he was still alive, some others even claimed to have met Fayyadh on their way to the palace. The quarrel was uncontrolled that they started to fight. A mass fighting took place. The king went out from the palace, taking control of the situation, and asked, “Why are you all fighting?”

Someone took his courage to inquire, “Your Majesty, who has actually died?”

“Fayyadh,” replied the king shortly and regretfully.

“Well, in that case, Your Majesty must be mistaken,” said the man.

“Fayyadh is still alive. We met him on the way here. We saw him with our own eyes,” added another man.

The king was perplexed. “Then take him here if he’s still alive,” ordered the king.

Before the men who were ordered to bring Fayyadh left the palace, Fayyadh came, covering himself with his father’s blanket. The king was bewildered as well as happy to see Fayyadh. Apparently, it was not Fayyadh whom he beheaded the night before. The king approached him, felt moved by his happiness,



and said in almost a whisper, “My son! Alhamdulillah, you are still alive.”

He embraced him and kissed him. He really regretted what he had done to him, and took him to the queen, who had also come out of the place to see what the commotion was about. The queen could not restrain herself. She hugged Fayyadh and kissed him dearly while crying in happiness and gratefulness that it was not him who got beheaded the night before. As the situation returned to some calmness and peace, the king ordered those who were wounded in the fight to be treated, and those who were killed to be buried. The king announced a state mourning for forty days. After the mourning period was over, the king, accompanied by the queen, summoned his three sons.

“Rhaden, Kiemas, and Fayyadh, come over here,” said the king. The three princes came forth without delay. The king started expressing his intention, “I’d like to talk to all of you. Rhaden has become a great scholar, but he cannot control the affair of the kingdom. When you recited the Quran, you just recited without paying attention to your surroundings. You had no shame being surrounded and touched by women in public, you did not seem to care.

As with you Kiemas, I don’t deny your skilfulness, but you are arrogant and pompous. Even if you are a great carpenter, you

should not become crafty and get what you want through foul play.”

The king continued, “Fayyadh, I have tested you through several tests. It is true that you master different sorts of crimes.

You are a great gambler and thief, but you did not do them for the sake of crime. You did them for the sake of learning. You have a wise way of carrying out your duties successfully, you are intelligent, and you carry out your duties thoughtfully. You can lead and you are not arrogant. Therefore, I have decided to make you the crown prince and nominate you my future successor.”

Rhaden and Kiemas realized their weaknesses after hearing their father’s assessment on their performances. They had to learn again and again, not only knowing, but also understanding the knowledge that they had learnt for the good and benefits of the human kind. The next day, a state announcement was issued that all people were invited to attend the feast of welcoming the return of the three princes and the inauguration of Prince Fayyadh as the crown prince. Everyone was overjoyed, especially the royal family for the reunion of all family members. The three brothers still learned to improve their knowledge and skill, both from books and from people of expertise in their fields. The kingdom became more advanced, and the people enjoyed prosperity. Eventually, the three princes became kings in different kingdoms, each was prosperous and well developed and managed. The three kingdoms

maintained a good cooperation in science and technology so they would not be left behind by other kingdoms.