

THE ORIGIN OF MATANG AND KARAS ISLANDS
Asal Mula Penamaan Pulau Matang dan Pulau Karas

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THE ORIGIN OF MATANG AND KARAS ISLANDS

The Wise and Benevolent Sultan

Once upon a time centuries ago, there was a magnificent and beautiful palace that was built in the Islamic architectural style called the Great Inner Palace of Ulu Bintan Kingdom. Shades of green and yellow adorned its walls and edges. Two yellow umbrellas signified the presence of a prominent personage who should be protected and guarded. Inside the building, a sultanate emblem was mounted firmly on the wall behind the dais with a magnificent, ornately-carved throne made of brass and copper. One chair was placed on each side for the beloved queen and child of the throne. A large Persian rug was spread in the middle of that glorious hall. Its red ground was filled with unique patterns and gold trimmings, adding to the magnificence of the court hall. *Anak lele*¹ decorated a glass table in one corner of the hall. Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alamsyah the Great Ruler of Riau-Johor-Pahang-Lingga is the title given to the ruler of the kingdom. Not only was he famous throughout the country, he was also an eminent figure in the neighboring countries.

Wisdom and eloquence were the two qualities of the Sultan that earned respect from his people and opponents alike. His

¹ the name of a small canon in the Lingga Sultanate era

generosity also made his subjects lived in harmony and prosperity. That day, the Sultan summoned the ministers to have a court meeting at noon. They had lunch together in the dining hall. Sometime later, a handsome and charismatic figure entered, wearing a sarong and a golden kris that was tucked into his front waistline. He walked towards the throne with a majestic bearing.

Other than the sarong that was wrapped around his waist, golden beads and necklaces also complemented his royal ensemble. A white sash with a gold-embroidered border was draped over his shoulder and fastened at the hip. A golden *tanjak* or headdress crowned his head and added to his heroic appearance.

His face, which was adorned with a slight, thin moustache above his upper lip, broke into a smile that could make everyone feel at ease. The owner of that smile then sat in his chair and rubbed his full stomach.

The delicious lunch had restored his energy to resume his activities again for the rest of the day. His Majesty Sultan then summoned the ministers and *Datuk Bendahara*² to report on their daily duties.

² Prime Minister – *bendahara* (A history of Classical Malay Literature by Liaw Yock Fang pg.377, 2013)

His Majesty Sultan wisely said, “My dear ministers, following our afternoon recess, we should return to work. Report on the tasks that you are responsible for.”

One by one began to report, starting from the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister gallantly sat on a floral cushioning ornate chair. He was a cousin of Sultan Badrul Alamsyah, was really close to His Majesty and had a thorough understanding on his characters. He was also adept in solving various problems, from matters of royal protocol to issues related to the council of ministers. It can be said that a Prime Minister was truly the one in charge of the kingdom’s domestic affairs. And so, Datuk Uban, one of the Minister began his report.

He said, “Praise be to Your Majesty. This servant would like inform the progress of our court preparation to welcome the dignitaries from the State of Kelantan who wish to open trade between our lands. Since their arrival coincided with our harvest festival, we should give them a jovial greeting.

This servant has asked our ladies-in-waiting and royal chefs to prepare delicious and sumptuous feasts of fish and other types of seafood, as well as fruits from the tribute paid to the Sultan.”

“Hmmm... you should not prioritize high-rank officials only, Datuk. Do not forget to serve ample dishes and provide festive entertainment for our people as in the previous year. They have

worked diligently in order to obtain bountiful yields from our land and sea this year, with better qualities and quantities than the previous year. Isn't that true, Dear Minister of Agriculture?"

Datuk Ali said, "Definitely, Your Majesty. This servant will do his best to organize and manage our people to keep working diligently."

Then, Datuk Bendahara said, "We should not miss the Minister of Marine's achievements, Your Majesty. He is very diligent. He handles the issues of fish trade directly. Furthermore, he asked our fishermen to maintain their boats and nets so that they would be at ease when they were fishing at sea, could avoid danger and catch abundant seafood."

His Majesty Sultan nodded, signing his approval to what Datuk Bendahara had said.

The Minister of Agriculture and People's Welfare, Datuk Tuan Fulana suddenly said, "Tomorrow I will ask the granary keeper to collect our people's tributes for safekeeping so that if a calamity or starvation strike, our people will not have food shortage problem."

"It's a good suggestion, Datuk. Do what you think is good for our people," said the Sultan a moment later. One by one the ministers reported their duties and actions they have taken to address the problems at hand. The meeting lasted until the call to prayer rang

out. Led by the Sultan, they went to the mosque to have a congregational prayer.

“Come, brothers, let us go to the mosque to fulfill our duty. Think not only matters of this fleeting world, but also God our Creator,” the Sultan invited before the call was finished.

“Very well, as the call to Asr prayer has been announced, I shall adjourn the meeting...” the Sultan said again.

Together they left the grand hall for the Great Mosque to perform their devotion, an expression of their hearts to the Creator.

People passing by in front of the mosque occasionally greeted His Majesty Sultan. Apparently, they were going to perform their devotion that afternoon too.

People Worked Hand-in-Hand for the Celebration

In the morning, excitement abounded across the land. People woke up early and hurrying into the royal court. Women, both young and old, carried baskets of plump and fresh fruits and vegetables from their fields into the palace gates. The men brought their catch for the day. Dozens of carts carried firewood to cook feasts for the celebration. Some of them also brought strings of fish and dried cuttlefish on their shoulders. Dressed only in a sarong in the scorching heat of the day, the men worked together to build the stage and set up a tent for the event, to

welcome guests from other countries and give thanks for their land's and sea's bountiful harvest this year.

The Prime Minister coordinated the festivity. He took control of the situation and organized the celebration.

Datuk Bendahara said, "Ladies and gentlemen, let's quickly wrap up our preparation for the party. His Majesty Sultan must be happy. Delicious food will be served, a magnificent stage would be erected, dancers and singers are ready to entertain everyone."

It was responded with thunderous applause. They were eager to finish their preparation for the celebration.

"Where should we place the cake trays, *Makcik* Hanna?" asked a lady who just arranged the cakes to the palace's head cook.

"Put it there, in the center of the table," she said, busily cooking rice. An old lady was also busy preparing chili sauce and salad for the party. She worked while reciting a poem sometimes, or joking with the other women around her who were also busy preparing for the party. The villagers had been going back and forth from their house to the royal palace for two days and two nights to prepare the party supplies. Smiles and greetings were exchanged each time they met an acquaintance.

Two days later the preparation was finally over. A royal feast was then held to welcome officials from Kelantan Kingdom, as well

as to give thanks for their abundant harvest last year. The celebration will be attended by guests from Kelantan Kingdom who had actually come to return the favor of Sultan Badrul Alamasyah's visit two months ago to open trade relations with their kingdom. Various entertainment and dances had been prepared to liven up the festivities. People rejoiced and enjoyed the feasts they had prepared together with the royal cooks to prepare a celebration from people to people, to welcome the arrival of the royal guests and to give thanks for the bountiful harvest.

An Incident in the Middle of the Party

The long awaited day to celebrate the bountiful harvest had finally arrived. All villagers had worked together prepare it. Some people cooked, the others set up tents and prepared entertainment, and the women gathered to help royal cooks preparing the feasts. The celebration started in the morning. Stage arts were constantly performed by both court dancers and commonners alike. All kinds of food from simple to luxurious had been served on long tables in the corner of the party area. That night the festivities reached its peak. Dances performed by Sultan's favorite court dancers became the highlight of the celebration. Malay songs were played to accompany the people in their dance. Children ran around in excitement.

High-ranking officials from other countries who arrived when the party had just started were seen smiling and occasionally danced to the songs. The Sultan and his consort laughed and clapped continuously. They enjoyed the party greatly.

The Sultan welcomed dignitaries from Kelantan Kingdom. Their royal envoy seemed to appreciate Sultan Badrul's invitation. They wore ceremonial dress of Kelantan Kingdom made of *songket*, a luxurious fabric woven with gold thread, and a loose long-sleeve shirt typically worn by the royal family. The Sultan of Kelantan handed a box that was immediately opened by Sultan Badrul. It contained a variety of gold and gemstone jewelry, signifying good relations between the two sultanates.

When the Sultan of Kelantan presented the gift to Sultan Badrul Alamsyah, he said "My dear brother, who is loved by people and companions alike, I offer this gift to you. Hopefully we can develop good relations between both countries."

"Thank you, my dear brother. I accept this gift with gratitude," replied Sultan Badrul.

"Let us enjoy the festivities and amuse ourselves with dances and songs performed by royal dancers," continued Sultan Badrul Alamsyah. However, suddenly there was a commotion from the direction of the palace gate.

People frantically bolted away. A shadow leaped out from a palanquin. It was a young man with a thick mustache. He let out a booming laugh.

“Hahahahahahah ... apparently there’s a celebration in this luxurious palace, huh...? Why was I not invited? Oh well! Obviously this party will be over soon, is not it?” the young man said as he crudely grabbed the food that was served on the table. Without being told, the gang who stood behind the young man scattered out, heading towards the tables full of dishes, tore down the décor on the stage and kicked all ornaments, accessories and chairs over there. The gang leader then said, “Come on, guys, eat all the fancy stuff we rarely enjoy. Tomorrow we will sail again. No one is going to cook such a delicious meal at sea.”

They looked at each other, swiftly approached the table and grabbed every dish roughly, ruining the delicate arrangement of the scrumptious feasts.

“Right, Boss. Why are we not invited by the Sultan at this party? Now is the time for us to entertain them, right?” said a grim-faced youth with a sword in his hand.

“Hahahahahahah...,” the gang laughed boisterously. The celebration stopped. People were startled and retreated little by little so as not to offend these troublemakers, whispering to each other in fear and watching the incident with mixed feelings. Some

were upset because their hard work in preparing the celebration had vanished in a puff of smoke. Some were angry because these rabble-rousers had messed up their lord's palace. Some were nervous and looking for their children or wife who got separated when the gang arrived.

"Who are they? They look so scary," a child whispered to his mother at the corner of the stage.

"Aaah ... Mother does not know. Well, it's better to get out of here. Otherwise, we're going to be stabbed by that sharp sword. It's awful," replied the mother who was trembling with fear.

"Over here! Quickly save Your Majesty from these outlaws!" said a soldier. Another soldier who heard the word of his friend was running towards where the Sultan was. He had not yet arrived there when he saw the Sultan walk out. The Sultan could not believe his eyes when he saw the commotion. His face was flushed with anger. He was furious because the celebration he held for his subjects was destroyed by the rioters.

Soon he ordered his retainers to arrest them and instructed them, "Soldiers, quickly arrest the rioters who interrupt my event!"

"Yes, Your Majesty," the soldiers replied.

For a while there was a duel between royal troops and the rioters, causing the situation to be increasingly out of control. When night

arrived, most people had left the party to take refuge. Soldiers with relentless spirit tried to protect the Sultan with all their power, sweat and blood. They ignored the injuries they received at the rioters' resistance. Their only purpose was to catch them. As the night wore on, their energy waned. Their hope seemed to get further from reality. They caught the troublemakers one by one, and put them in jail. However, their leader and several of his subordinates could not be captured because they got away. The atmosphere became increasingly tense. The celebration had to be stopped and people were asked to go home. They were also prohibited from leaving the house until it was declared safe.

The Troublemaker

Who was the swordsman who disrupted the celebration? Only few people knew about him. Apparently he was a wicked swordman, which meant he used his martial arts and physical prowess to harm the weak. Some people who knew about his background called him the “Dour Swordsman” He was a man with a bad temper who liked to create trouble. When fighting, he relied on his physical strength and the mystical power of a kris in his possession. Hence no one dared to fight him. It was said that the kris he carried everywhere was a kris imbued with magical power that could strengthen and improved the holder’s ability. His profession as a *lanun* suited his bad temper well. *Lanun* was

the word for a buccaneer who plundered ships and seized the crew's food or valuables to survive, or better known as a pirate.

In the past, it was mostly done by sailors if they failed to get enough catch when they sailed the sea. Initially, these sea wolves only plundered the invaders' large ships to scare them away and made them leave the Archipelago's ocean territory. Over time, many ordinary ships or vessels that were owned by wealthy merchants for trading their merchandise overseas also got plundered. Besides plundering, he also had another bad habit that was to pit people against each other. He will force them to battle each other like a cockfight. Then, he would make it a public spectacle. Most people disagreed with it. However, he would harm anyone who disobeyed his command with his magic kris. It was a habit resulting from his pride. Actually, he was hoping that the people he pitted against each other would oppose him so he had a reason to harm them. That was his other pastime in addition to being a pirate. The fighting was usually done in a narrow strait connecting the two islands named Penyabung strait. It was situated under Barelang Bridge on Batam Island.

Unfortunately, not many people knew about his family background. People only knew that the Dour Swordsman's parents had died when he was a child. They died in the sea. His harsh, solitary life with no parent to guide him was what caused him to act capriciously. Most people did not know about his

appearance. So if they encountered someone tall, big and muscular wearing a long mustache and had typical laugh in the middle of the sea, it was the Dour Swordsman. On a sunny day, the Dour Swordsman gathered his men on the edge of the woods with meats, fruits, and palm wines served before him.

“Are you celebrating something?”

Suddenly a voice caught the attention of everyone who was enjoying their meal.

“Hahahah....just watch out, Sultan! You think you can tear down my defenses by arresting my men. Take them, then! I don't care! They will die sooner or later when there are no more people that I can toy with,” said the Swordsman. As people listened to the words being said, they stopped their activities. They got startled for a moment and tried to take in what they just heard. One of the people who seemed to be intoxicated said, “Damn you, Dour Swordsman! You turn your men into a meat shield. You do evil, but you let your men suffer from it instead.”

“Heh, if you don't like it...get away from me...you're that afraid of dying, hah? Ptooy...!” said the Dour Swordsman again as he spat.

“You're not that cruel, are you, Dour Swordsman? I'm your best friend since childhood you know,” his friend replied.

“Who knows... hahahah. Just joking! How I cannot be upset, my temper rise, my heart burn, my soul rebel...when I have to face the fact that the kingdom is opposing me and disparaging my name.”

“I’ll fight them any time. Just you wait, my magic kris will tear apart the soldiers’ bowels as well as Sultan Badrul Alamsyah who is now in power. Hahahah ...,” he said with a booming laugh.

“Hmm ... we should prepare a strategy so that the people of this kingdom do not underestimate us and could give us the supplies that we asked for,” said the youngest of them.

“Hey... apparently there’s a smart one here huh...yes...yes...I will think about other things that we can do to silence those stupid soldiers and commoners,” said the Dour Swordsman.

That Peaceful Kingdom Was No More

The Great Inner Kingdom of Ulu Bintan was a peaceful, tranquil and serene land where winds blew off the sea. Each house had a wide yard full of trees that bore fruits according to their seasons and coconut trees that swayed in the wind.

A couple was heading to a sailboat with a small rice basket and a bowl of food for their lunch. A little girl jogged down the path and an elderly woman hurried away with firewood over her shoulders.

An old merchant who was waiting for customers sat beneath a tree and fanned himself with his sarong to ward off the heat. A cake seller carrying cakes on a winnowing tray above her head was walking down the village path as an elderly man hobbled along with the aid of his stick. In the corner of a large courtyard, several youths were busy cutting up firewood when the others splitting the coconuts open and grating the flesh.

Villagers did their activities as usual on that bright morning. In that quiet village, there was no sign of concern over the continuation of the incident at the party a few nights before. However, the real situation was not like what was seen on the outside. The villagers had never been the same ever since. They felt unease when they were doing their daily activities both in the sea and at marketplace, especially after hearing that the swordsman who stirred up trouble at the party the other day had an unusual hobby. People were feeling restless because he became bolder with his actions, causing several families to go short of food because of their reluctance to sail the sea. The market also got deserted since a lot of merchants did not open their shop out of their fear of encountering the cruel swordsman. Only a few people were seen doing their daily tasks, but they did everything with apprehension.

They actually worried, but necessities of life had driven them out of the house. However, the odd atmosphere only lasted until late

afternoon. When darkness enveloped the village, no one was seen outside. They either gathered in the house of one villager or at a coffee stall, talking about the behavior of the Dour Swordsman. Their curiosity about the Dour Swordsman's background and his behavior at the party that time made him a hot topic of conversation. The Swordsman behavior was indeed beyond common sense, especially his pastime of pitting humans against each other as though they were animals, which was inhumane. He gathered strong fighters and ordered them to battle each other for no apparent reason. If they refused, they would be labeled as cowards and must fight with him. The fighters, of course, at first dared to fight back because they did not know the magical power of his kris.

One by one, the fighters who fought back got injured by his kris. The kris's imbued magical power could freeze the human body and weaken the bones until they cannot move, and even lost their life a few moments later. Such incident happened almost every week. Many warriors, who were once fathers and heads of their family, had fallen victim to it and returned only in name.

The ruckus caused by the gang led by the Swordsman had seriously disrupted the community. They snatched the fruits in the villagers' gardens. Dried fish in their house yard vanished without a trace. In fact, the market was often ransacked for food. No one dared to take action. They were afraid of the Dour Swordsman's

vengeful character. They had raised their concern many times to the palace, but various actions which had been taken to address the Dour Swordsman's violence were all in vain. People got restless and lost their drive to work because the Dour Swordsman's gang always took away what they had earned. Their attempts to stop the Dour Swordsman's actions were just a pipe dream, a wish that was impossible to accomplish.

The Despondent Sultan

The sweltering heat increased as the sun began to move towards midday. Winds blew a parade of white clouds. Rolling waves pushed the jaunty sailboats back home after whole day fishing. One glimpse into the open sea and nothing but the expanse of blue-green sea was seen. Gentle breeze was blowing softly between palm trees and mangroves on the beach.

It was hot, but the fishermen were calm because their fish baskets were fully loaded and ready to be taken to the auction. However, such activities were dwindling due to their fear of the Dour Swordsman. Every time they went back from fishing, they would be rushing to the market with their catch to auction and sell it in haste. Sometimes, they would quickly barter their fish with other food commodities. They were worried that the Swordsman's gang would suddenly come and snatch their catch. His Majesty Sultan seemed restless as he stood in the corner of the court library. Despite holding a book, he did not even turn the page. He was in

a daze, being occupied by various thoughts. He thought to himself, “I wish the news that my people had about the Dour Swordsman was but a lie. However, seeing the reality, it was hard to believe that the country that used to be safe had become like this. What kind of tribulation is this?”

As he brooded, a beautiful woman wearing a gold-embroidered veil of the royal princess entered. The beauty, who was dressed in a loose long-sleeve shirt with an exquisitely woven sarong, was the beloved wife of the Sultan. The consort went in and ordered her lady-in-waiting next to her to offer a cup of water to the Sultan.

The Consort said, “Pour the drink into the cup, Lela, to refresh His Majesty’s body and mind, as he seemed to have lost in thought.”

The lady-in-waiting carried out the instruction. After that, the Consort signed her to withdraw after pouring the drink. As she gently offered a cup of tea in her hand, the Consort said, “It’s not good to ponder on something like that, Dear Husband. You could not sleep nor eat well. Please drink the herbal tea that I have made to refresh your body.”

“Oh, yes, Wife...do forgive me for overlooking my own health. It was a headache trying to find a solution to stop the evil actions of

the pirates under that Swordsman,” His Majesty Sultan replied as he inhaled the aroma of the drink that his wife had prepared.

“Has there been a solution that My Lord could think of?” asked the Consort a moment later. For a moment the Sultan was lost in thoughts again. A number of possible solutions to capture the Dour Swordsman were swimming around his head.

“A new idea comes to mind, Dear Wife. Your Husband will hold a contest and invite mystical warriors from many islands under my rule and the other kingdoms to stop his action,” suddenly the Sultan spoke with renewed vigour.

“Well, I think that is the best way for now, Husband.”

“*Dayang*³, go out and ask the Prime Minister to call out several retainers here,” ordered the Sultan to the lady-in-waiting who knelt on the corner of the room.

Shortly thereafter, she returned, reported that the order of His Majesty Sultan had been carried out. Then, the Prime Minister entered and presented himself before the Sultan.

“Your Majesty, your servant would like to report that the retainers you summoned forth have gathered in front of the palace. What would Your Majesty wish us to do?” he asked. The Sultan did not say anything. He strode directly towards the front of the palace.

³ Lady-in-waiting

There, he met the royal retainers and ordered them to prepare a contest. “Retainers, announce throughout the country that the Sultan invites all warriors to defeat the Dour Swordsman, the reward shall be one of the islands under the Sultan’s territory and a box of treasures.” His Majesty ordered the Prime Minister to prepare the rewards to show the seriousness of his intention of the contest.

Never Stop Fighting Against Crime

The Sultan was furious when he heard that his kingdom was still not safe from the gang’s clutch. He could not eat or sleep well and his mind was always occupied with ways to stop the gang. At first, the Sultan sent a number of royal troops to capture the gang. However, it was met with failure. In fact, none of the royal troops survived as they were all died under the magical kris of the Dour Swordsman. The second attempt was to hold a contest for all the people in his kingdom and nearby countries to find and capture the Dour Swordsman. In the contest, it was said that if one of the warriors succeeded to eradicate the gang, they would be rewarded with an island and a box of treasure. The contest was spread throughout the land under his domain and even to other kingdoms. There had been many warriors, even astrologers and diviners who tried to battle the Swordsman, be it physically or magically. However, no one succeeded.

The contestant could only return injured or died after getting stabbed with the Dour Swordsman's magical kris.

The Prime Minister's Advice

One bright afternoon, the Sultan sat on his throne, still preoccupied with the safety of his subjects that he could not enjoy the good weather. At that time, the Prime Minister came to report some things which he had done and to inform the situation at the palace. After a few moments of gloom, His Majesty Sultan expressed the problem that led him to brood.

“*Datuk*, it doesn't mean that I don't like to hear your story. Usually your story can brighten my day because I can hear about the things that happened outside. However, it seemed like you didn't tell me everything. I'm sure the circumstances of my people are not as good as you portrayed them to be. The constant harassment of the Swordsman's gang made me restless,” said the Sultan.

The Prime Minister approached the throne and said, “Your Majesty Sultan, this servant hopes that it won't be considered presumptuous of me to offer some advice. This is tied to the security of this kingdom because of the trouble caused by the Dour Swordsman.”

The Sultan did not seem eager to hear it. He was confused and had run out of ideas to defeat the swordsman.

“Your Majesty, pardon this servant, this time if God’s willing we will not fail again,” said *Datuk Bendahara* as he tried to convince the Sultan.

“All right, tell me,” said the Sultan.

“This lowly one heard that Swordsman Arang from the Island of Seberang, a long-time acquaintance of mine, has a disciple. This servant had met him there on an errand. He said that he had passed on all his knowledge to his disciple Tun Bija Ali who was also known as the ‘Rival Swordsman’. I will ask one of the ministers to convey our intention to my friend,” said *Datuk Bendahara*.

“Do you mean what you say, *Datuk*? I’m glad to hear it. Very well, let’s carry out your proposal. Hopefully this Rival Swordsman can be of help to us.”

The Sultan sent one of the ministers to ask him to defeat the Dour Swordsman as *Datuk Bendahara* had proposed.

A Kind and Brave Young Man

The Sultan assigned the Minister of Defense with the task to pick up the Rival Swordsman. The Minister of Defense left with a royal retainer, and spent four days and three nights to reach the island where the warrior stayed. On the fourth day they arrived at their destination. Morning mist grew thin, revealing a small and

quiet village. Roosters fluttered their wings about and crowed loudly to wake up the villagers who were still overcome with drowsiness. One by one, windows and doors began to open, allowing the cool air of that morning to seep through every corner of their house. The morning sky looked even more exquisite as the sun peeked over the horizon. The beauty of the morning had lifted their spirits in doing their daily activities.

The villagers, who were mostly farmers, formed a close-knit community that was tied by a principle of mutual cooperation and interfamilial relations.

In the village lived a handsome and brave young man. He was the son of a simple but hardworking fisherman. In addition to working as a woodcutter, to supplement his income, he helped his father to go fish in the sea. His name was Tun Bija Ali, the only son of his parents who wished him to be a chivalrous and wise leader.

From birth to adulthood, Tun Bija Ali with his family and the villagers had always lived in happiness. He was diligent and filial.

Since childhood, he always woke up earlier to help his mother light a fire and afterwards, cooked breakfast for his father before his father went into the forest. He also cleaned their house and yard diligently. He planted a patch of vegetable on the left side of

his house with the seeds he obtained from the vegetables that his mother had bought from the market.

He planted palm trees and fruit trees such as guava, mango, and areca nut on the right side of his house. He planted their backyard with medicinal herbs and spices such as ginger, turmeric, lemongrass, and much more for his mother's use. Everyday Tun Bija Ali tended his plants carefully. After growing up, he also helped his father to go fish in the sea.

As a brave and chivalrous young man, Tun Bija Ali also liked martial arts. For years he had been training with youths in his village under the guidance of the elderly Swordsman Arang. Days turned into months. And months turned into years. He had spent quite a long time practicing martial arts.

His friends had resigned one by one, either because of marrying or leaving to other countries. Only he himself left in the school that he attained the highest level of martial arts in his studies. He had competed in many battle contests between warriors. These contests were mostly held to maintain a cordial relationship between martial arts schools. He had won a number of these battle contests too. Eventhough he was already proficient in martial arts, he still practiced his techniques dilligently. At one point his teacher said, "Tun Bija Ali, today I will pass down my ultimate technique to complete my legacy to you. You just need

to practice often, be humble in heart, and always help people in needs to preserve this technique's mystical power.”

“I will follow all of your advice, *Datuk*,” said Bija Ali.

That day, they practiced perfecting the techniques that Swordsman Arang had taught to his favorite disciple until sundown.

“Tun Bija Ali, because you have worked hard to practice your techniques with me and passed the test today, you shall be given the title of 'Rival Swordsman'. With it, I wish you can have the courage to fight against evil and to free people from the clutch of evil,” said Pendekar Arang before concluding their meeting that day.

“Thank you, *Datuk*, for your confidence in giving the title to me,” said Tun Bija Ali. “Go home and do as I told you,” said Pendekar Arang.

After kissing his teacher's hand, Tun Bija Ali returned to his home and told the memorable event he experienced that day to his mother. The Sultan's envoy came to meet the Rival Swordsmen. The Minister of Defense sent by His Majesty Sultan told him the purpose of his arrival, which was to ask the Rival Swordsmen to have an audience with His Majesty and carry out his order to defeat the Dour Swordsman who had disturbed the tranquility of the land. “Hopefully the Rival Swordsman can join us in the fight

against the Dour Swordsman who has caused,” invited the Minister of Defense. The Rival Swordsman replied without hesitation, “All right, I shall accept this challenge. I will do my utmost to help save our fellow human beings.”

The End of Evil

One day the Dour Swordsman gathered people to fight on Penyabung Island. He called them out to battle.

“Hiya, *Encik*⁴ Kadir and *Encik* Kasim, you have to fight to the death. Come on, I will promote whoever wins this to admiral.”

He chuckled as he twisted his thick moustache that partially covered his hideous upper lip. “This lowly one cannot fight against *Encik* Kasim, Swordsman,” said *Encik* Kadir.

He spoke without looking at the Swordsman’s face for fear of inciting his anger.

“*Encik* Kasim is a close childhood friend of mine,” said *Encik* Kadir, trying to avoid the match that will start soon. *Encik* Kasim was very nervous. He wanted to be excused from it so that he and his friend did not have to fight against each other. Sweat trickled down his forehead. In a slightly hesitant voice he said, “Yes, we cannot fight let alone harm each other, Swordsman. We’re like brothers.”

⁴ Mister

“You talk too much. So you want to defy my wish, huh?” said the Dour Swordsman with bulging eyes. He also took out his magic kris then brandished it at *Encik Kasim*’s belly.

“Take a good look at this kris before it pierced you for daring to defy my order, *Encik Kasim!*” Said the Dour Swordsman loudly, making the situation more tense.

“No! Let me take the punishment instead, he should not pay the price for my defiance,” *Encik Kadir* abruptly exclaimed.

The Dour Swordsman ignored *Encik Kadir*’s plea. He lifted his kris high and ready to stab *Encik Kasim*. Suddenly the kris flew in the air then fell to the ground as if someone had struck it down. The Dour Swordsman was furious and shouted as he looked for the person who tried to fight him.

“Hey, show yourself! Who dare drop my kris? Do you not know who you are dealing with?” he snarled. A short silence ensued. All who gathered were looking at each other, wondering what had just happened a moment ago. They murmured and whispered to each other. Suddenly a shadow flashed and a handsome, valiant figure appeared.

“It was me. Allow me to introduce myself. I am called the Rival Swordsman, and I will stop all of your evil deeds.”

“Come on then, fight me if you dare!” said the Dour Swordsman. The Rival Swordsman accepted the challenge because it suited his purpose for coming to the island. A fierce fight broke out. For days and nights, they battled, through the wind, over the sea, on the shore, and in the woods.

It Was Never Too Late to Repent

The Dour Swordsman was defeated at last. He was not as strong as he used to be, when he had the kris that he always boasted about. He lost his prided mystical kris that he normally used to intimidate other people. The Rival Swordsman said, “How much innocent blood you have shed here, Swordsman? You have captured countless humans and forced them to fight one another just like a cockfighting game here, in this strait.”

The Dour Swordsman could not move. He trembled since he felt powerless without the mystical kris that he always carried everywhere.

Actually, his courage was bolstered up when he had his weapon while the others were unarmed. But now the situation was reversed. He was confronted by a swordsman who possessed a mystical kris, while he himself was empty-handed. He shivered in fear. He wanted to flee, but the Rival Swordsman restrained him. His body shook, sweat dripped all over his body. He was

really afraid that the Rival Swordsmen would hurt him. So, he groveled and begged for mercy.

“My Lord...please forgive me. Somehow, when I saw your greatness, I feel small. Have mercy, I will not behave arrogantly like I did in the past because actually there is someone more powerful than me.”

The Dour Swordsman did not dare to look him in the eyes. The Rival Swordsman was very kind though, he could not bear to hurt others even though he felt that what the Dour Swordsman had done was simply too outrageous. Unexpectedly, he asked the Dour Swordsman to meet with the Sultan. The Dour Swordsman was very frightened, but he still followed the Rival Swordsman. He was afraid that His Majesty Sultan would punish him harshly. Along the way, his head was filled with images of the punishment that he might get. However, he could not escape because his hands had been tied by a very strong chain. He was also helpless. Many villagers accompanied their journey to the palace. They were ready to hold him back if he tried to flee. The villagers were no longer afraid with the Dour Swordsman who had been powerless without the mystical kris in his possession.

However, thanks to the kindness of the Rival Swordsman Tun Bija Ali, he was pardoned by the Sultan. It turned out that the punishment given by the Rival Swordsman was not as he expected and feared.

A Reward

To make a long story short, the Rival Swordsman reported his success in defeating the Dour Swordsman to His Majesty Sultan. He explained why he did not bring the Dour Swordsman as he had promised to change his behaviour.

“So be it. I’m sure you have considered all your decisions and will be responsible for the consequences,” said the Sultan. His Majesty Sultan could accept and understand the Rival Swordsman’s reasoning that everyone deserved a second chance to better themselves. The Sultan then rewarded the Rival Swordsman with an island. The Rival Swordsman married and built his family on the island. People called it ‘Penantang Island’.

Then, years later the island was known by the name of Mantang Island, which meant island of the sea people, as it was mostly inhabited by fishermen.

Living in Exile on a Small Island

What about the Dour Swordsman after he was pardoned? What happened to him after he was forcibly driven out and exiled to an uninhabited island? He was banished to a small island very far from the centre of the royal government. It took two days and two nights to reach the island with an ordinary fishing boat. The island was surrounded by strong tidal currents. It could be said that only resilient people were able to travel there due to the

fierce waves and storms that always came crashing. The journey that he had to get through in order to reach the island was not easy. The boat was very small and fragile. He brought a little food just enough for himself to survive for several months. The island was nameless and uninhabited. There was not a single edible plant there other than wild coconut trees on the shores of which some had already bore fruits. The island was very barren, dry, and hot. Every morning, he was grateful to have been given a second chance to live. With high spirits he grew a variety of fruits and vegetables on the island, whose seeds originated from the fruits and vegetables in his supplies. Days turned into months, and months turned into years.

Life began to flourish on that harsh and arid island. The Dour Swordsman also changed. He became a kind, diligent young man that liked to help others. Several times when the storm struck, many fishing boats crashed onto the island he inhabited. He helped them and asked them to also take care of the plants he tended to supply their food. Then, he trained several able-bodied youths who wished to settle on the island to fortify their physical and mental strength. It was needed so that whenever foreign nations invaded, these young men that he had tempered could survive and defend their country. He realized that wickedness and arrogance would obviously hurt and harm others. He tried to be a useful person by taking advantage of the Sultan's leniency and the opportunity that Tun Bija Ali had given him to better himself.

His harsh life on the island changed for the better thanks to the hard work and harmonious relationship among its inhabitants. The life on the island was gradually improving. The island became beautiful. Since the changes on the island took place thanks to the hard work of the Dour Swordsman who used to be notorious for his ferociousness, the people named the island 'Keras Island' which later turned into Karas Island.