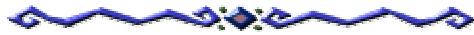


The Virgin Queen of the Malay World

Ratu Perawan Dunia Melayu



Elizabeth I the Virgin Queen of England was not alone as a woman ruler who remained unmarried throughout her life.

Let's begin with the death of Elizabeth in 1603. Seven years after her death, a Malay princess ascended the throne of Kelantan to eventually reign longer than Elizabeth. She was Princess Wan Kembang.

When Wan Kembang was born, Kelantan was so prosperous that foreign merchants were said to intentionally destroy their own vessels upon arrival so that they could have an excuse to stay there forever. Wan Kembang's father died when she was about four years old and the sole heiress. A cousin of Wan Kembang's mother, a prince of Johor, was appointed to be the Regent. Wan Kembang's royal uncle handed over the throne only at the time of his death, by then she was in her thirties.

Wan Kembang was apparently well-groomed for her job: Kelantan continued to prosper under her rule. Arab traders bestowed upon her the title "Paduka Cik Siti" in which Siti means honourable woman. Henceforth, the Queen of Kelantan came to be known as Cik Siti Wan Kembang. Like Elizabeth I, Wan Kembang turned down marriage proposals to remain single for the throne.

Elizabeth I Ratu Perawan England bukan satu-satunya pemerintah wanita yang tidak berkahwin sepanjang hayatnya.

Mari kita bermula dengan kemangkatan Elizabeth pada tahun 1603. Tujuh tahun selepas baginda mangkat, seorang puteri Melayu menaiki takhta Kelantan dan akhirnya memerintah lebih lama daripada Elizabeth. Baginda ialah Puteri Wan Kembang.

Sewaktu kelahiran Wan Kembang, Kelantan dikatakan begitu makmur sehingga pedagang asing sengaja memusnahkan kapal sendiri setelah berlabuh agar mereka ada alasan untuk menetap di sana. Ayahanda Wan Kembang mangkat ketika baginda berusia lebih kurang empat tahun. Sepupu bonda baginda, seorang putera raja Johor, dilantik sebagai pemangku raja. Pak cik Wan Kembang menyerahkan takhta hanya pada waktu kemangkatannya, ketika itu Wan Kembang sudah berusia tiga puluhan.

Wan Kembang nyata diasuh dengan sempurna bagi menjalankan tugasnya: Kelantan terus makmur di bawah pemerintahannya. Pedagang Arab menggelar baginda "Paduka Cik Siti". Siti bermaksud perempuan mulia. Sejak itu Ratu Kelantan dikenali sebagai Cik Siti Wan Kembang. Seperti Elizabeth I, Wan Kembang menolak banyak peminangan. Baginda rela membujang demi kesejahteraan takhtanya.

Her favourite companion was an adorable barking deer which she immortalized by stamping its likeness on her royal coins. The name Cik Siti Wan Kembang and her beloved barking deer became synonymous with Kelantan until this very day.

Wan Kembang probably retired in her nineties and was succeeded by her adopted daughter, Princess Saadong. After this point, she became a legend because nobody knows where and when she died.

It is believed that the mother of Wan Kembang was a princess of Pattani. An older contemporary of Wan Kembang, also ruled Pattani as an unmarried queen. She was Raja Hijau or the Green Queen.

She was chosen as a ruler under tragic circumstances, after all male heirs in her family died as a result of power struggle. The people preferred her to her predecessors, praising her for making prices of food cheaper.

Unlike a movie which portrayed the Green Queen competing with others to obtain some cannons under the sea, the historical Green Queen actually made Pattani a prosperous trading center in which one of its hot items was - firearms. Disputes among traders from Japan and Holland might had tested Her Majesty's diplomatic skills. However, it was these traders who helped defend Pattani against a formidable threat, Siam.

Teman setianya ialah seekor kijang manja yang diabadikan dengan menerap gambar kijang tersebut pada wang emasnya. Nama Cik Siti Wan Kembang bersama kijang kesayangannya disinonimkan dengan Kelantan hingga ke hari ini.

Wan Kembang mungkin bersara semasa berusia sembilan puluhan dan digantikan oleh anak angkatnya, Puteri Sa'adong. Selepas itu, Wan Kembang menjadi legenda kerana tidak ada sesiapa yang tahu di mana dan bila baginda mangkat.

Orang percaya bahawa bonda Wan Kembang merupakan seorang puteri Patani. Seorang wanita lebih tua yang hidup sezaman dengan Wan Kembang, juga memerintah Patani sebagai ratu yang tidak berkahwin. Baginda ialah Raja Hijau.

Raja Hijau dipilih sebagai pemerintah dalam keadaan penuh kesedihan selepas kesemua waris lelaki dalam keluarganya mati akibat perebutan kuasa. Rakyat jelata lebih suka akan Raja Hijau berbanding dengan pemerintah terdahulu. Mereka memuji baginda kerana menurunkan harga barangan makanan.

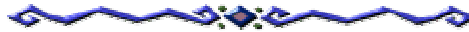
Tidak seperti sebuah filem yang menggambarkan Raja Hijau berebut meriam yang tenggelam di dasar laut dengan orang lain, Raja Hijau sejarah sebenarnya menjadikan Patani sebuah pusat perdagangan pesat di mana salah satu barang jualan hangatnya ialah - senjata api. Pergaduhan antara pedagang Jepun dan Belanda mungkin mencabar kemahiran diplomatik baginda. Namun, pedagang-pedagang tersebut membantu mempertahankan Patani daripada ancaman Siam yang menggerunkan.

Raja Hijau was succeeded by her sister Raja Biru, the Blue Queen who was also unmarried. Raja Biru died after ruling for only eight years. She was succeeded by another sister Raja Ungu, the Purple Queen. Raja Ungu passed the throne to her daughter Raja Kuning, the Yellow Queen. I can assure you this is not fairy tale. This was the golden era of Pattani under the four rainbow queens : Raja Hijau, Raja Biru, Raja Ungu and Raja Kuning. These ladies ruled Pattani for almost a century.

If only Elizabeth I were able to communicate with the Malay speaking world, she would have found quite a few women in the same shoes as she was.

Raja Hijau diganti oleh adindanya Raja Biru yang juga tidak berkahwin. Raja Biru mangkat setelah memerintah selama lapan tahun sahaja. Baginda diganti oleh adindanya yang satu lagi, Raja Ungu. Raja Ungu pula mewariskan takhta kepada anakandanya, Raja Kuning. Saya memberi jaminan kepada anda bahawa ini bukan cerita dongeng. Ini merupakan puncak kegemilangan Patani di bawah pemerintahan empat ratu pelangi iaitu: Raja Hijau, Raja Biru, Raja Ungu dan Raja Kuning. Wanita-wanita tersebut memerintah Patani hampir satu abad.

Andai kata Ratu Elizabeth I dapat berhubung dengan dunia Melayu, baginda akan mendapati beberapa orang wanita yang senasib dengannya.



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