

AWANG BATIL STORIES
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(1) Awang Akar Larak

This is a tale of a young man who is so poor that he wants to take his own life. He finds some *akar larak*, a rope-like climbing plant found in the jungle. He tries to use the *akar larak* to hang himself. As Awang closes his eyes, with the *akar larak* around his neck, he hears a voice. He opens his eyes and sees a mysterious old man dressed in white before him. The old man tells Awang: “Even if you try to kill yourself, you will not die, because it is not your time”. Awang tells the old man the cause of his despair—he is so poor that at times he can’t even feed himself. The old man tells Awang that he will help him turn around his fortune.

The old man advises Awang to learn to become a *bomoh*, a Malay shaman, to heal the sick. He guides Awang and tells him to follow this method: take some *sireh pinang* (betel leaf and betel nut) and apply it to the forehead of the sick person. Then he instructs Awang to close his eyes and direct his inner gaze towards the sick person's head and feet. The old man says: "If my image appears at the patient's head, he cannot be cured and will die; if you see me at the tip of the patient's feet, he will be cured."

Awang returns home and sits on the stairs in front of his doorstep, deep in thought. He sees some villagers heading to the house of the *tok penghulu* (village headman), who has been ill for a long time. Awang follows them and announces that he wants to try to cure the village headman. He asks for *sireh pinang* and for payment in the form of rice grains. The family tells Awang that if he can cure the village headman

they will give him 10 *gantang*, around 36kg, of rice grains. Awang applies the *sireh pinang* to the patient's forehead and closes his eyes. Awang sees the old man at the village headman's feet, and knows he can be cured. Just then, he hears a voice rumbling like thunder. The village headman springs up, fully recovered. The family is grateful to Awang and gives him 10 *gantang* of rice grains. Awang's reputation as a powerful *bomoh* spread throughout the kingdom. People seek him out far and wide to cure the sick, and Awang lives comfortably from his earnings of rice grain.

One day, the Sultan hears of Awang's powers as a *bomoh*. He orders his *hulubalang*, warrior general, to find Awang and bring him to the palace. The Sultan wants to test Awang, and pretends to be ill. The Hulubalang brings Awang to the palace. Awang applies *sireh pinang* to the Sultan's forehead, closes

his eyes and scans the Sultan's head and feet. He sees the image of the old man in white at the Sultan's head, and knows that the Sultan cannot be cured and will die. Awang tells the *hulubalang* that the Sultan cannot be cured. Hearing this, the Sultan gets up in anger. He commands the *hulubalang* to banish Awang from his kingdom. The *hulubalang* follows the Sultan's orders and banishes Awang far from the kingdom.

When the *hulubalang* returns, he finds the palace in chaos. The Sultan has breathed his last, and he is without a male heir. The palace nobles order the *hulubalang* to find Awang and bring him back to replace the Sultan, because he predicted the Sultan's death. The *hulubalang* follows their command and goes to find Awang. The people of the kingdom follow the *hulubalang* to find Awang. A few days later, as Awang is sitting by a lake surrounded by green fields,

he sees a huge crowd coming towards him led by the *hulubalang*. Awang thinks they have come to kill him and tries to run away. Instead, the *hulubalang* tells him, “Don’t run away, Awang! We have come to bring you to the palace to replace the Sultan.” They bring Awang back to the palace and dress him in royal garments. Awang marries the Sultan’s beautiful daughter and becomes the Crown Prince, the new ruler of the kingdom.

(2) Awang Nakal

The tale of a young man, Awang, with a naughty character. He is particularly disobedient towards his little sister. Their parents had passed away at a young age, leaving their two children behind. Awang never stays at home; he tells his sister he is working but he goes out and idles all day long. However, he always appears at meal times to enjoy the food his sister prepares. Awang's sister grows tired of his idleness and tells him to go to the town to find work. She goes to see a *bomoh* to cure Awang of his idleness and trickery. The *bomoh* gives her some 'medicine' which was actually poison.

The next day, Awang's sister packs some food for him, adds the 'medicine' to it, and sends him off. Awang walks in the direction of the town, but instead of heading to town he lies down to rest under a tree.

He hangs the packed food his sister had prepared on a branch. As Awang is resting, a wealthy diamond merchant passes by, riding an elephant. The elephant catches sight of the food hanging on the branch, snatches it, and devours it. Awang wakes up startled to see the elephant eating his food. He challenges the elephant to a fight, and throws a punch at the great beast. The wealthy diamond merchant laughs in amusement. A moment later, the elephant falls down dead.

The wealthy diamond merchant is stunned and terrified at Awang's strength and power. He tells Awang he would give him anything he asks for. Awang asks for money and diamonds, which the merchant willingly gives him. Awang brings his new wealth back home to his sister. Awang's sister does not believe his story, thinking that he stole the diamonds. Disappointed, Awang takes leave of his

sister and their parents' home. He walks towards the forest and embarks on many adventures. Eventually, one day, Awang marries the daughter of a village headman.

(3) Awang Parang Besar

This tale features a poor, young man with an impressive physique. His body is beautiful and brawny, with rippling muscles like that of a wrestler. Awang is too lazy to work but he eats a lot to maintain his physique. Awang's mother toils from dawn to dusk in the fields while Awang lazes at home.

One day, Awang's mother gives him a *parang* (Malay machete) and tells him to clear the jungle for farming. Awang tells his mother he doesn't want a small *parang*, he wants a large *parang* because he's a large man. Annoyed at her son, Awang's mother goes the next day to forge a large *parang*. When she brings the large *parang* to Awang, he says he needs to eat first and asks his mother to make a large pot of rice. He devours the entire pot of rice, then takes

the large *parang* and starts clearing the jungle.

When he returns home, he asks his mother to cook another pot of rice. His weary mother grows angry and chases Awang out of the house. She tells Awang to leave and find work and not to return until he can stand on his own two feet.

Awang leaves and wanders far from his home, experiencing life on his own for the first time. He learns how to eat fruit and plants from the jungle in order to survive. One day, he wanders to the seaside. He comes across a young man with large hands, Awang Tangan Besar. The young man tells Awang that his mother also chased him out of the house for being lazy and told him to learn to be independent. A little further on the shore, they meet a young man with large feet, Awang Kaki Untut. He was also chased out of his home by his mother, for

being lazy. The three Awangs become friends and wander together.

The three Awangs sit by the sea, watching the waves strike the shore. They ask each other playfully, “Why don’t we try to empty the sea?” And so, the three Awangs take a large piece of wood and playfully pump out water from the sea, until the sea by the shore is empty. On the empty seabed, they find hundreds of fish—large, small, of all sizes and shapes, even an enormous whale. The three Awangs are hungry and help themselves to the large fish, including the whale. After they eat to their hearts’ content, the three Awangs take the whale’s head and start kicking it around like a ball without letting it touch the ground. This is how the game *sepak raga* originated.

During the game, Awang Parang Besar kicks the whale's head high into the sky and it falls somewhere near a palace in another kingdom. The *wak nujum* (court astrologer) of the kingdom goes to inspect the whale's head and instructs the *hulubalang* (warrior) to remove it. The whale's head is so enormous that even the mighty *hulubalang* cannot remove it, nor can any of the strongest men in the kingdom. After several days, the whale's head starts to decompose and stink. The King gives an order that any man who can remove the whale's head will be granted the princess' hand in marriage. The three Awangs make their way to the palace to try their luck. They play another game of *sepak raga*, and one of them kicks the whale's head all the way into the sky, until it disappears and lands in another faraway kingdom.