

**THE MYSTERY OF PULAU IMAM**  
*Misteri Pulau Imam*

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**Language Development and Cultivation Agency**  
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## **THE MYSTERY OF *PULAU IMAM***

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# Misteri Pulau Imam




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CERITA DARI MALUKU UTARA

Ditulis oleh  
**Risnawati Djauhar**

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## MISTERI PULAU IMAM

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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. KESUSASTRAAN RAKYAT-MALUKU</li><li>2. CERITA RAKYAT-MALUKU UTARA</li></ol>

## Foreword

Literature work is not only series of word but it also talks about life, both realistically and idealistically of human. If it is realistic, the literature work usually contains life experiences, good model, and wisdom which have been added various style and imagination along with it. Meanwhile, if it idealistic, the literature work contains moral lecture, good character, advices, philosophical symbols, culture and other things related to human life. The life itself is very diverse, varies, and full of various problems and conflicts faced by humans. The diversity in humans life also affects to the diversity of literature work because the contents are inseparable from civilized and dignified humans life.

The literature works that dealing with life utilizes language as medium of deliverance and imaginative art as its *cultural land*. On the basis of the language medium and imaginative art, literature is multidimensional and multi-interpretative. Using language medium, imginative art and cultural dimension, literature deliver messages to be reviewed or analyzed from various perspectives. The outcome of that perspective depends greatly on who is reviewing and analyzing with various socio-cultural and knowledge background. There is a time when a literary reviewer reviews from the point of view of metaphor, myth, symbol, power, ideology, economy, politics, and culture can be refuted by other reviewers who see from perspective of sound, referent, or irony. Even so, Heraclitus said, "However opposite they work together and from different directions, the most beautiful harmony emerges".

There are many lessons that we can get from reading literature, one of which is reading folktales that are adapted or reprocessed into children's stories. The results of reading literature always inspire and motivate readers to be creative in finding something new. Reading literature can trigger further imagination, open enlightenment, and add insights. For this

reason, we express our gratitude for the processors for the story. We also express our appreciation and gratitude to the Head of the Coaching Center, Head of the Learning Division, and Head of the Subdivision of Modules and Teaching Materials and staffs for all the efforts and hard works carried out until the realization of this book.

Hopefully this storybook is not only useful as a reading material for students and the community to foster a culture of literacy through the National Literacy Movement program, but also useful as an enrichment of our knowledge of past life that can be utilized in addressing current and future life developments.

Jakarta, June 2016

Regards,  
Prof. Dr. Dadang Sunendar, M. Hum.

## Preface

Praise the presence of Allah SWT. because thanks to his mercy - the author can finish this North Maluku folktale with the title of the Mystery of Pulau Imam. This story is a folk tale originating from Nurweda Village, Weda District, Central Halmahera Regency which is one of the districts in North Maluku.

Broadly speaking, the story of the Mystery of Pulau Imam contains a moral message for readers, especially children. The moral message referred are improving students' morals, behavior, ethics, and increasing awareness in everyday life whether it's in school, family, or society.

In this story, the author also introduces life in North Maluku both in terms of attitude, tolerance, and concern among people, polite greetings and various special foods that only exist in North Maluku.

The author expresses her utmost gratitude to Prof. Dr. Gufran Ali Ibrahim as Head of the Language Cultivation Center and to all Language Offices throughout Indonesia for giving this golden opportunity to write folklore. Appreciation also for the entire selection committee of the 2016 National Literacy Movement for the updates that being conveyed continuously to all participants. Not to forget, the author also thanked the Head of the North Maluku Language Office, Drs. Songgo Siruah, M.Pd. who has provided information on writing folklore for elementary school children to achieve the success of the 2016 National Literacy Movement.

Ternate, April 2016  
Risnawati Djauhar

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# THE MYSTERY OF *PULAU IMAM*

## 1. The Arrival of Arab *Imam*

Cock-a-doodle-doo...

Cock-a-doodle-doo...

The sun was about to rise in the east, shining upon a small beautiful village on the north side of Nurweda Village, Weda Sub-district, Central Halmahera Regency. The small village was called Pulau Imam, a three-hectare village. *Pulau* literally meant 'island' dan *Imam* was an Islamic leader.

Amidst the roosters' crows, the sound of a man reciting *Al Quran* pierced the cool morning air. It was beautiful and comforting. The man was disciplined with his morning routine. He always performed *salat subuh*, the morning prayer, before the sun rose. On a makeshift prayer mat of banana leaves, he sat down and prayed. After that, he always recited *Al Quran* with his beautiful voice. The roosters often talk about him among themselves. "Listen, friends, that Imam's voice is so beautiful," one of the rooster said.

"Yes, it is. He is so diligent and disciplined. If we were just a few minutes late, he would surely beat us in waking up the people," another rooster commented.

The man was called Imam. He lived alone in a small hut. He had been living alone since he was six. The hut had witnessed how he grew from a child into a pious man.

He spent his daily life learning and practicing his religious values. His morning ritual was just one of those practices. Anyone who heard him reciting *Al Quran* in the morning would always feel calm.

After performing *salat subuh*, he usually walked on the beach. By the time he reached the beach, there had been a few people there, bringing their fishing lines to catch fish for their meal that day. This morning, Imam saw several familiar faces.

“*Assalamualaikum*. Good morning, Baba,” Imam greeted Mr. Arsyad. *Baba* was the way younger people address older men. Mr. Arsyad was busy pulling his net from the sea.

He glanced behind to see who had greeted him.

“*Wa’alaikum salam*, Boy. How are you today?” Mr. Arsyad replied.

“I’m good, Baba. *Alhamdulillah*,” Imam said. “You look a little pale, Baba. Are you alright?” “I feel a bit under the weather. But, don’t worry, I’m still strong enough to work. Uhuk . . . uhuk . . . uhuk,” Mr. Arsyad answered and coughed.

“Poor Baba. He still has to work hard at his age,” Imam thought.

He quickly picked a spot and casted his fishing line.

While fishing, Imam said nothing but prayers. *Baba Arsyad* admired this 20 years old man. Imam only thought about the afterlife. He always recited *Al Quran* wherever he was and whatever he was doing.

Splash... Splash...

Imam heard the sound of fish jumping in the water. He was surprised to see five fish gathered near his fishing line. He could not hear the fish talking with each other.

“Look at Imam, trying to find something to eat,” Cakalang fish called its friends.

“Brother, we have to help him. He is a good man and he always uses the fish he caught for good use,” another Cakalang fish said.

“You are right. This whole village is his. I think it is just right if we give ourselves to him. He fishes while praying to Allah,” the first Cakalang fish suggested.

Three yellowtail fish chimed in from behind them, “He deserves to catch us, Friends.”

Imam was amazed when the five fish took turn to bite on his bait. He quickly got them out of the water and put them in a bucket. “*Subhanallah*, praise be to Allah.



Thank you for giving me sustenance, oh, Merciful God,” he said.

Mr. Arsyad had long ago stopped wondering about Imam’s luck. He smiled because this had happened every time Imam went fishing. Imam was always able to catch the fish easily, as if the fish gave themselves to him.

“Baba, I give you these three fish. Please take them for your lunch.

Now you can go home and have some rest.” “What about you?

“I still have these two fish and they are more than enough for me, Baba.”

It was Imam’s habit. He always shared whatever he earned or obtained from nature to other people, either Mr. Arsyad or other fishermen he met. No matter how many fish he caught, he would only take one for himself and give out the rest.

Imam packed up his fishing rod and picked up the bucket. He was going to return to his hut. Usually, if he still had fish after sharing them with the fishermen, he would sell the fish in the market.

While walking home, Imam remembered that today was the day of harvest. He and other villagers would harvest the fields in Nurweda Village. Imam decided not to sell his remaining fish as usual. He thought that they could cook the fish and eat them together after working the fields. Imam returned to his hut and put

the fish near the stove. He then walked among the plants in the fields on his backyard.

“Thank you, kind fish. Today I can use you for something good,” he said to the fish before going out.

On his backyard, Imam tilled the soil and planted cassava. This was one of his routines. Whenever he harvested his fields, he would share the produce with the villagers. He only took a little for himself. After planting new cassava stalks, Imam gathered the villagers. They were going to harvest the fields soon.

“You can take as much as you want, Baba, Yaya,” Imam told the villagers when they started harvesting. *Yaya* was a respectful way to address older women. Imam considered every older villager as his father or mother. That was why he called them *Baba* or *Yaya*, which literally meant ‘Father’ and ‘Mother’.

“How could we, Imam? They are your harvest. This three-hectare land that we live in and build a village upon is also yours. How can we be so ungrateful and take your harvest?” Mr. Samin said.

“This is not mine, Baba. Everything here belongs to Allah, God Almighty. That’s why I consider sharing as my duty. You are all my parents. You have helped raising me until I can become what I am today.

All my harvest is not even close to compensate all the trouble I

ever caused you. Go on, take as many as you like,” Imam told them.

“Thank you very much, Imam. We’ll pray for you,” Mr. Arsyad said.

While they were busy working in the fields, a huge ship was seen coming close to the beach. Imam and all villagers were surprised. Toot . . . toot . . .toot.

They heard the horn of the ship, a sound they never heard before. They quickly finished their works and went to the beach to see who had come with such a huge ship. The captain stood on the deck, smiling, while the ship docked. When the ship had fully docked, a voice greeted the villagers from the ship, “*Assalamualaikum*, good morning, people of Nurweda!”

A man walked down the ship’s steps and stood on the beach. His charisma was so great that everyone stared at him in awe.

“That voice. . . he must be the Arab Imam. I am sure it’s him,” Imam muttered, “I have seen him in my dreams.” The villagers who overheard him were confused.

“Welcome, Arab Imam,” Mr. Samin greeted the guest, trying to break the ice.

The Arab Imam smiled and put his hand on Imam’s shoulder. “You have grown up, Imam,” he said. Imam kissed the Arab

Imam's hand as a sign of respect.

“Welcome, Teacher,” Imam greeted him respectfully.

Several villagers quickly cleared a space under clove trees and prepared a seat of honor for the Arab Imam. The women began to prepare lunch, using the harvest they had just gathered. Imam quickly walked towards the group of women and approached Mrs. Lili.

“Yaya . . . I was fishing this morning and caught some fish. I kept them in a bucket in my hut. They are still fresh. Maybe Yaya can help me cook them for our lunch,” Imam said.

“Sure. I'll get them from your hut and cook them with the others,” Mrs. Lili replied.

Imam thanked her and walked to the place where the men were already talking with the Arab Imam.

“Ladies, what if we cook fish *gohu*? Imam just told me he had some fish in his hut. My husband has also brought some fish this morning,” Mrs. Lili said to the other women.

“Raw fish with spices and herbs? Sounds delicious. I have some tomatoes, chilies, and onions at home. We can use them,” Mrs. Mina quickly replied.

“As it happens, I just harvested my lemons yesterday, Mina. We



can use them too,” Mrs. Saoda added.

After they agreed on the menu, the women quickly got to work. They prepared the traditional dish of North Maluku, the fish *gohu*. They would serve it with steamed cassava, steamed taro, and some vegetables. By midday, the dishes were ready. The women served them on a bamboo table.

“Imam, go ask the Arab Imam and the captain to have lunch with us,” Mr. Arsyad told Imam. “Teacher, let’s have lunch. After that, we can perform *salat zuhur* here,” Imam said to the Arab Imam.

The Arab Imam smiled and signaled the ship captain and his crew to join the villagers around the table.

“Teacher, these are our traditional dishes. We have some cassava, taro, and vegetables. This one is made of banana blossom. We call it *sayur kusi*. The delicious dish over there is called *fish gohu*. It is basically raw fish with spices and herbs,” Mr. Arsyad explained.

“Let’s pray before we dig in,” Imam said and led the prayer.

This was a common thing in Nurweda Village. The people always worked together and helped each other. Part of it was because Imam who, despite his young age, always gave them advice and direction to live a better life.

After lunch, the Arab Imam asked them to perform *salat* together

on his ship. After *salat*, he held a discussion, talking about religious matters. When the Arab Imam concluded the discussion, everyone felt a little wiser. The villagers then returned to their homes or fields, doing what they usually did. Imam and his teacher walked around the village.

When they arrived at the village's small cemetery complex, the Arab Imam stopped and shot his gaze towards the top of the mountains surrounding the village.

“That place will be the witness of my existence,” the Arab Imam said quietly.

“Teacher, what do you mean?” Imam was confused.

The Arab Imam then asked him to walk towards the hills. They found Mr. Ali and Mr. Arsyad clearing the area. They were going to turn the area into a banana plantation. Imam quickly helped them because he knew that the harvest from this new field would be enjoyed by everyone in the village.

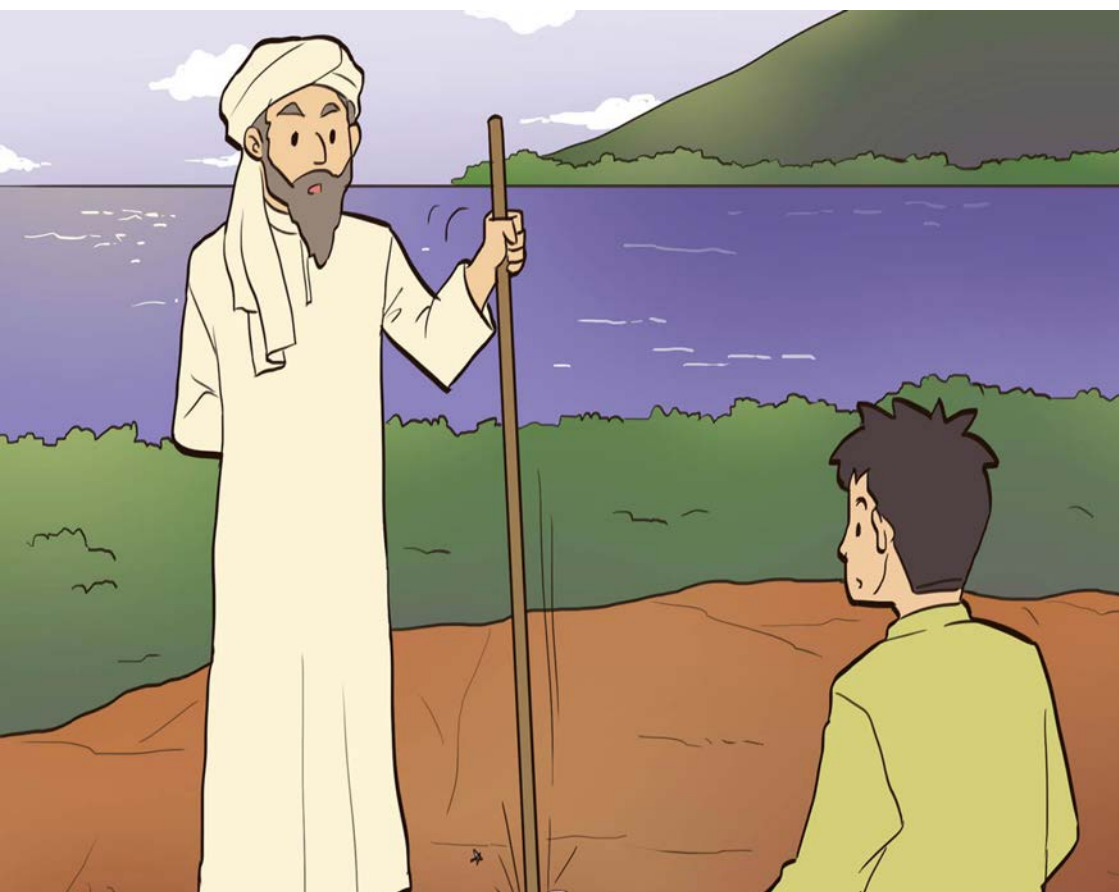
The Arab Imam walked towards a piece of land on their right. He clutched a long staff in his hand.

“Wherever I might be when I sighed my last breath, my grave will emerge here,” he said, sticking the staff deep into the ground.

Mr. Ali and Mr. Arsyad could only stare in confusion. They did not understand what was happening. Imam said nothing. He was

just smiling. In his heart, he understood perfectly what his teacher meant.

A few days after the Arab Imam left the village, a strange thing happened.



## 2. A Mysterious Grave Appeared

A few days after the Arab Imam left the village, Imam walked towards the hill where he had a long discussion with his teacher. He brought some villagers with him to clear the area. In addition to banana, he decided to also plant papaya and coconut in the area.

“It has been a while since the last time we use that hill for plantation, Baba. I think it’s time we clear it and use it again,” Imam said to the villagers.

“You are right, Imam. Let’s go now, while the sun is still low,” Mr. Ali replied.

While working, they talked about the village’s harvest.

“Imam, I think you should use the money you get from selling the coconut and banana to rebuild your hut,” Mr. Arsyad said.

“Well, I don’t need much, Baba. I think it’d be better if we use the money to build a small mosque. We need a better place to perform *salat*. If the money is not enough, we still can save them,” Imam said nonchalantly.

Mr. Arsyad was taken aback. Imam always put the people before himself. They continued clearing the area until suddenly...

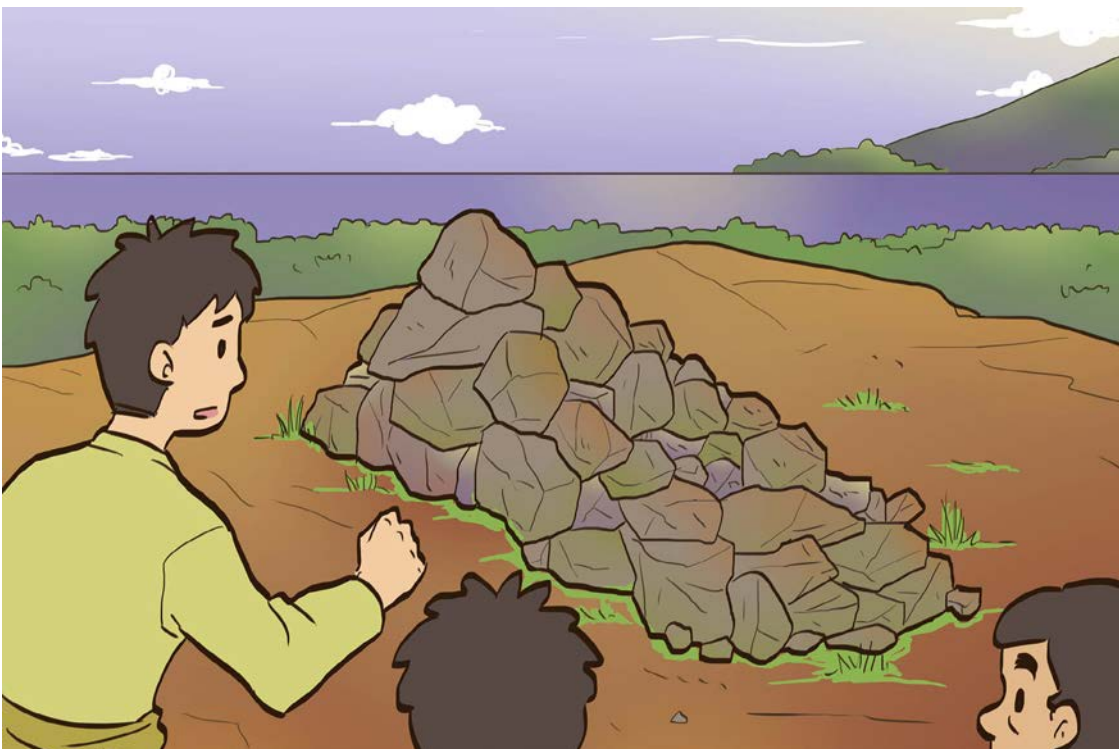
“Aka ... Aka...,” Mr. Ali called his brother, Mr. Arsyad.

“What is it, Ali?” Mr. Arsyad called back.

“Aka, Imam, come here and take a look at this! These rocks look like a big grave,” Mr, Ali shouted urgently.

Mr. Arsyad walked towards his brother. He could not believe what he saw. There was a pile of rocks in front of them, clearly looked like a grave. However, nobody was ever buried in this part of the village. If it was a grave, he did not know where it came from or who was buried there. Imam, who was standing next to Mr. Arsyad suddenly remembered what his teacher had said the last time he stood at that exact spot.

“Could it be the grave that my teacher, the Arab Imam, talked about?” Imam thought to himself. He was a little panicked.



They quickly got rid of the weeds and grass on top of the rocks, trying to ascertain their suspicion. When they had cleared all the weeds and the grass, they clearly saw a grave in front of him. Imam closed his eyes and recited, “*Inna Lillahi wa inna ilaihi rajiun.*” It was an Arabic expression used by Moslems when a misfortune happened, particularly when someone died. It meant “Everything comes from Allah and comes back to Allah.” “Why did you say that, Imam? Is it truly someone’s grave?” Mr. Ali asked. He was confused.

“My teacher had gone. He had gone back to the Owner of the Universe. He once said to me that his grave would appear here when he died, wherever he might be when it happened,” Imam explained.

Mr. Arsyad signaled Mr. Ali to tell this news to the villagers. Soon, everyone in the village was on the hill, seeing the grave with their own eyes.

Imam tore his gaze from the grave and spotted the staff that the Arab Imam had stuck in the ground. On top of the staff was a white cloth. Imam’s teacher had tied it himself. The cloth was dirty and ragged, but the staff was truly the Arab Imam’s.

“Let’s all pray for his soul. He was our teacher. The Arab Imam had taught us so much about our religion,” Imam said.

They cleared the grave and began to pray. Near the grave was the

staff that the Arab Imam had stuck, with the white cloth on top.

“This staff proved that the Imam had been here. I hope none of you get sidetracked by this staff. Trust in God, trust the power of Allah. Don’t ever think that this staff has any power. It’s just a staff, a sign that the Arab Imam had set foot in our village. Let’s not forget that,” Imam told the villagers.

“We follow your advice, Teacher,” Mr. Arsyad said.

After they prayed, Imam suggested that this part of the village should be used as a cemetery for the people of North Maluku, since a mysterious grave had suddenly appeared there.

After that, all villagers returned to their homes and their activities. Mr. Arsyad and Imam stayed to continue clearing the area. They cancelled the plan to plant coconut and banana on the hill. “Let’s use some of the fields on your backyard to plant the banana and coconut, Imam,” Mr. Arsyad said. “Yes, Baba . . .,” Imam responded quietly. They immediately put the plan into action.

One day, Imam was fishing with the other villagers as usual. Suddenly, they saw a ship coming towards them quickly. When the ship docked, the people came out with a body. They wanted to bury the body in the village’s cemetery. It had been a villager from North Maluku who had died due to an epidemic outbreak.

“Baba, let’s go with them to the cemetery. It’s a pity that only so

few people coming to his funeral,” Imam said to Mr. Arsyad.

They then helped taking the body to the hill. The funeral ceremony was performed. After that, Imam led the people to pray.

When they had finished burying the body, Imam and his companions went back to their fishing. As always, Imam was surprised to find how easy it was for him to catch fish. In twenty minutes, he had caught seven big fish. He left two fish with Mr. Arsyad, asking him to give them to Mrs. Jubaidah, a poor widow who lived with her eight-year-old son.

“Please give her these fish, Baba,” Imam said.

“What if she asked who gives her these fish?” Mr. Arsyad asked.

“Don’t tell it is me, Baba. Sincerity should not be put into words,” Imam replied.

Mr. Arsyad smiled and promised to take the fish to Mrs. Jubaidah. Then they separated, each going back to their own home.

When he arrived at his hut, Imam quickly cleaned himself.

He was going to lead *salat asar* that afternoon.

After observing *salat asar*, Imam decided to take a walk. He went to the cemetery to pray for the Arab Imam at his grave. He had



just reached the top of the hill when he heard the sound of twigs snapping.

Crack... crack...

A man was collecting woods, while a woman and a child sat on the right side of the Arab Imam's grave.

"Excuse me, are you going to pray for the late Arab Imam, too? If you are, can I join you?" Imam asked them.

"Excuse us, Imam, could you leave us alone for a few minutes? We are doing a ritual," the man replied.

"Ritual? What are you talking about? This is a cemetery!" Imam was a little shocked.

"We are asking for health. We are worried that the epidemic outbreak might hit us. It has killed many people in North Maluku," the woman explained.

Imam could not believe what he saw.

The family had brought offerings, such as turmeric rice, money, and a piece of square white cloth that they tied to a stick, imitating the Imam's staff. The sound that Imam had heard before was the man's effort to make a stick from a tree branch.

"This is *syirik*! You believe in something other than Allah, God

Almighty,” Imam reminded them. “You should not do this. The disease came from God and the cure will come from God too. There is no illness without a cure. You should pray to God for your health, not to a grave,” he added.

“What do you care!” the man raged.

“I care because this village is free from such *syirik* behaviors. I and other villagers have tried hard to keep it that way.”

“Enough with your stupid concern. Just let us do what we come to do. We will finish the ritual and you will never see us again.”



Imam then remembered one of his teachers' advices, "Remind them who are performing sin as much as you can. If they refuse to listen, stay away from them."|

"I will wait until you leave," Imam said.

The man then walked away with his wife and child. Imam cleared the grave from weeds and moss, then put several *pandanus* leaves and flower petals on it. Before leaving, he prayed for the Arab Imam.

That afternoon, Imam was walking along the beach. On a rock, he sat down and reminiscing about his teacher. He remembered all the teachings the Arab Imam gave him. Imam then prayed and asked for God's forgiveness for all his sins.

The sun was almost down, Imam quickly got up and walked home. He cleaned himself and prepared for *salat magrib*. On the way to the small mosque they built, Imam met a man who was crying under a nutmeg tree.

"What happened to you, brother? Why are you crying?"

"I am sad, Imam." "Why? Is there anything I can do to help?"

"People hate me. They don't want to socialize with me because they believe I am a bad man. They think all I do is bad. They always talk about my mistakes, but never my good deeds. I always help them, aid them, care for them, but they do not care

about me.” “Come on. That’s enough. Stop crying.”

“But it hurts, Imam. It hurts so much.”

“Hold out your hand and try to feel the breeze. Is it cool?”

“Yes, it is. It’s because there are a lot of trees here, isn’t it?”

“Now let me ask you. Have you ever given back what the air and the trees gave you?”

“If I can return their kindness, I will, Imam. Is that what you are trying to say?”

“Well, the air and the trees never expect you to return their kindness, even if you are willing to. You are sad because you expect people to return your kindness. That makes you an arrogant person. You think you are so good. That is not the appropriate way of thinking.” “What do you mean?”

“What I mean is, if you do something good and you do not expect others to return your kindness, you will not feel this hurt. Try to manage your own expectation, you will see that it is better.”

“Try to forgive them. Clear your heart from worldly ambitions. Your sadness will gradually go away.”

“Very well . . . I will try to do that. Thank you, Imam. You are truly an exemplary man. No wonder everyone in this village

follows you.”

“You are welcome. I just give what should be given, brother.”

Imam always tried to give good advice to people, so that they could lead a better life. He asked the man to walk with him to the mosque.

After *salat*, the villagers had a serious discussion. They talked about the deviant practice that people did on the Arab Imam’s grave. Many people came from other villages with money to put on the grave. They believed that putting money on the grave, either coins or bills, would grant them protection and health.

It was as if they tried to buy health from whatever spirit they believed in.

The people also stuck long poles or sticks on the right side of the grave. They tied a white cloth on the tip of the pole, believing that it signified their pure intention. They believed it would persuade the spirit to grant their wish.

“I don’t understand,” Mr. Arsyad said, they put money on the grave, thinking that it can buy health for them and their family.”

“I have encountered those people too, but they ignored my advice,” another man said. “Then, what should we do?” the villagers asked.

“Let’s just keep giving them advice. Try to get them to see reason. Have faith and be strong. *Insyah Allah* they will listen in the end.” “If they don’t?”

“Then it’s their problem. We have the obligation to right the wrong, to spread goodness. To tell them that they are wrong. Once we do that, we have done our duty. The rest is up to them.”

Imam always gave the people some advice, no matter how small, after they performed *salat*. He always hoped that the people would follow his teachings. When the villagers had left and returned to their home, Imam always stayed at the mosque. He would pray and recite *Al Quran* all night until eleven o’clock. He did this until the end of his life.

### **3. Imam Passed Away**

One day, Imam fell ill and finally passed away. Before he died, Imam gave his final words to the villagers. He wanted them to take care of the village and to allow people from other villages to bury their dead in the village's cemetery, as long as they did not perform any deviant act. After the funeral ceremony, the village chief gathered the people and made an announcement. "Remember, Ladies and Gentlemen, Imam was a very influential figure in this village.

He deserved our utmost respect. So, I ask all of you to follow his final words," he said.

"Syekh Imam. . .," Mr. Arsyad's son sobbing uncontrollably because his teacher had passed away. Imam's other pupils were also devastated.

In fact, not only the people of Nurweda Village who felt the loss, the fish in the sea also gathered and cried. "Imam had left us. . . He was so kind to us," the Cakalang family cried.

"The beach now feels so empty. Imam would never fish again," another fish said.

The sky got darker and darker that day. After Imam was buried, the rain poured as if the heaven mourned him. Mrs. Mina's son, Khairul, was a student of Imam. He loved Imam so much. When

he returned from the cemetery, he did not go home. He chose to sit in front of the small hut they used as the village mosque.

“Khairul, what are you doing here?” Mr. Ali asked him.

“I missed Syekh Imam,” he said softly.

“Then, pray for him! Don’t you remember what he always taught you?”

Khairul tried to remember his many discussions with Imam, particularly concerning loss. He replayed the conversation in his head.

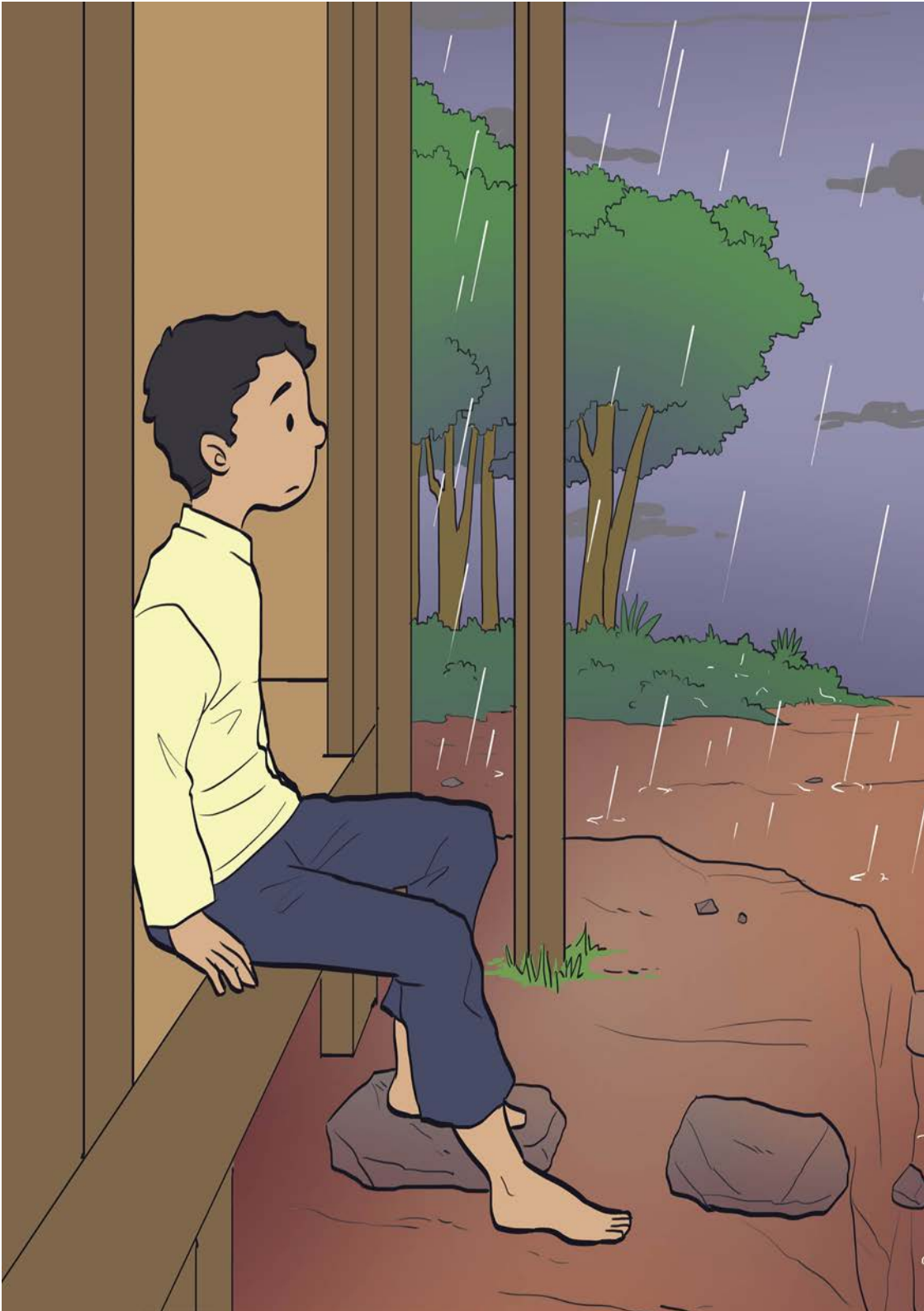
“Do you know what a happy man looks like?” Imam asked.

“Happy? Hmm... happiness is when we can get what we want, when our wish comes true,” Khairul replied. “That’s incorrect, Boy,” Imam said.

“Incorrect? Please enlighten me, Syekh,” Khairul said.

“Listen. A happy man is when he loses something, he manages to not be sad. If you want to be a happy man, control your emotion, control your expectations. Try to not be too sad when you lose something,” Imam explained.





Remembering that advice, Khairul felt a little better. Mr. Ali then called Khairul and the other children to recite *Al Quran* and prayed for Imam. While the children were reciting *Al Quran*, Mr. Ali and the other adults sat together to discuss who would replace Imam as their religious leader.

“Whoever it is, he should be ready to lead our people too,” Mr. Ali said.

“I think it would be better if we will hold a meeting with the elders and Imam’s students to discuss this matter.”

They agreed to hold the discussion the next day.

It was a fine morning and the birds chirped merrily on the trees. It was after the Dutch colonial period in North Maluku. A Dutch general had passed away and they wished to bury him at Nurweda Village. The group saw a local man in the distance and decided to talk to him.

“Good morning. We want to ask your permission to bury our brother’s body in your cemetery before we leave North Maluku,” one of the Dutch, who was fluent in Bahasa Indonesia, asked. The people of North Maluku, including Nurweda Village, were generally tolerant. The villagers permitted the Dutch to bury the general in their cemetery.

“This cemetery is actually intended for Moslems. However, we

don't think that there is a problem if you want to bury your brother here. Let's get to it," Faisal, Mr. Arsyad's oldest son, spoke for the people.

The villagers then helped with the procession.

After the funeral, the Dutch soldiers thanked the villagers. They were leaving Maluku to return to their country soon.

*"Terima kasih,"* the leader of the group saying thank you in broken Indonesian.

Near a tree, a little far away from the grave, two soldiers were busy whispering. The villagers who noticed them could not help but feeling curious. They felt that there was more to this affair than met the eye.

Suddenly, one of the Dutch gave the signal to his people that it was time to get back to their ship. They were leaving North Maluku.

"We should go now," the man called.

They left the cemetery in a line, heading towards their battleship. The ship's horn blared loudly. Toot... toot... toot.

The villagers returned to their homes. Some of them prepared to go fishing, as they usually did when Imam was still alive.

“Guys, let’s meet on the beach in fifteen minutes, alright?” Faisal said to his friends.

“I have to go home and help my mother dry the sago first.”

“I and Khairul have to get ready first,” Reza said.

Fifteen minutes later, they gathered on the beach and find a spot to fish. When they were waiting for a fish to bite their bait, a group of fish gathered in the water.

“Look, Imam’s students are fishing.” “We miss Imam,” the fish said.

Khairul noticed the fish and remembered the story of how Imam used to fish. He felt grateful that he still had a chance to learn and be better.

“I wish you were here, Syekh. . .,” Khairul muttered under his breath.

That afternoon, the women prepared to cook dishes for the ten-day commemoration of Imam’s passing away.

“Mrs. Mina, tonight we will gather to pray for Imam. I plan to make Tidore layered cake. Mrs. Lili told me she would make *lalampa* cake from sticky rice and fish. What about you?” Mrs. Julaiha asked.

“I have some ripe banana at home. I think I will make *nagasari* cake,” Mrs. Mina replied. The villagers worked together in preparation for that night. It was one of their traditions, working together in preparing social events, particularly in commemoration of someone’s passing away. They would gather in the evening to recite *Al Quran* and prayed on the third, seventh, tenth, and thirtieth days after someone passed away.

A few decades had passed. Even though the people of Nurweda Village still carried on their tradition and still followed Imam’s instruction, people from other places did not. Many people came to the cemetery in Nurweda Village with offerings. They put money on the Arab Imam’s grave because they believed it would give them health and cure their illness. One day, the village chief was patrolling the cemetery area. A woman approached him. She was clearly not a local.

“Good morning,” the woman greeted him.

“Good morning. Where are you going, ma’am?” Mr. Saleh, the village chief, asked.

“I am going on a pilgrimage. I want to ask for my son’s recovery.”

“What do you mean?” “Well, people said that if we come to a grave in this village and give offerings of money and white cloth, we can ask for health. My son is ill and I want him to be healthy

again.”

“That’s a sin! It means that you believe more in a grave than in God. You shouldn’t do that.” “But a lot of people have proven it.”

“That’s just coincidence. If you are ill, go to doctor, not to a grave.”

The woman ignored Mr. Saleh’s advice and continued walking towards the grave. She broke a long branch of a nearby tree and stuck it in the ground. She then took out the white cloth she had brought and tied it around the stick. She also put some money on the grave.

The village chief could only shake his head. He muttered under his breath, saying that today’s people had returned to the age of ignorance.

Meanwhile, on the beach, Faisal and his friends were preparing to go home. They had been fishing. On the way to the village, they met two researchers who had just arrived on a boat.

“Boys, may we ask you some questions?” one of them asked.

“Yes, Sir. Is there anything we can help you with?” Khairul answered.

“Have you heard stories about a villager from North Maluku who had died from an epidemic outbreak and was buried in this

village?”

“As a matter of fact, I have. My father once told me the story, but I know nothing about the man,” Reyhan said.

“Could you tell us where we can possibly find information about this matter?”

“Hmm... I guess you can ask our parents. I believe they can help you,” Khairul said. They then took the two men to the village to see Mr. Saleh, the village chief.

“What is this, Boys?” Mr. Saleh asked. He was a little confused.

“These two gentlemen are looking for someone, Sir.”

“Well, what can I do to help?” Mr. Saleh addressed the two researchers.

“Well, Sir. We are, in fact, looking for a grave, not a person. It is a grave of someone who died due to an epidemic outbreak several decades ago. We believe that he was buried in this village.”

“Do you mean the outbreak that killed a lot of people in North Maluku?”

“Exactly, Sir. Is the grave truly here? We would like to take some sample from the remains for research purposes.”

“I believe he was not from this village. But he was buried in our

cemetery. Come, I'll take you to his grave."

The village chief showed them the grave and gave them permission to take what they needed, as long as they did not disturb other graves. With permission from the village chief, the researchers called their friends to help digging the grave.

Several men came from their ship and began to dig. However, a strange thing happened that afternoon. The more they dig, the more they found fresh soil. There was no sign of a body at all.

"It's weird. What is happening here?"

"Are you sure this is the grave?" one of them asked the village chief.

"Yes, I am sure. No one ever dug a grave in this area. I can assure you that it had never been touched."

"But we have dug so deep and still found nothing. In fact, the soil seems fresh, not like it had been dug to bury a body."

The researchers felt the hair on their necks stood. They were too afraid to continue with their mission and decided to return to the city.





It was truly a strange occurrence. The cemetery, where many people had been buried in, looked as if there was nobody ever buried there. Even though there were many graves and tombstones, the whole cemetery was like an untouched vast field when it was dug.

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More years passed. Imam, who had always guided the people to do good deeds and taught rightful behaviors had been gone for so long.

More and more people began to forget his teachings. They believed that the Arab Imam's grave was a mystical place that could grant their wishes. Only the people of Nurweda Village still followed Imam's teachings.

One afternoon, Reyhan and Faisal were heading to the fields to get some coconuts. When they passed the cemetery, they were surprised to see a couple sitting beside the Arab Imam's grave. They were husband and wife who were performing their absurd ritual. In front of them, the offerings were scattered.

“What are they doing?” “I don't know, Reyhan. Let's find out.”

“Excuse me, Sir. What are you doing here?”

“We come here to ask for blessings and health.”

“Why do you come to a grave if you want to be healthy?”

“Shut up! What do you know? Just leave us alone. We’re about to finish, anyway.”

The woman put more money on the grave while her husband made a stick from a small tree. He tied a white cloth on the stick and stuck it in the ground.

“We have to report this to the village chief. I’m afraid it might have a huge impact on our village,” Reyhan said.

The two boys quickly returned to the village and found Mr. Saleh. The couple ignored them and continued with their ritual. They believed that the grave could cure their illness and give them wealth.

“Excuse me, Sir. We want to report something,” Reyhan said to Mr. Saleh.

“What is it, Son?”

“We just witnessed two people doing strange ritual in the cemetery.”

“They are stubborn lot! Let’s go there.” Mr. Saleh took them back to the cemetery. Once there, he told the couple off, but they did not want to hear a word.

“What are you doing? This is a great sin! If you want to be healthy, go to the doctor!”

“What do you care? Can you guarantee our health?” the man snapped.

“Yes, is it you who give us fortune?” the woman followed suit.

“As the leader of this village, I want to remind you to stop doing this blasphemy!”

“I beg your pardon, Sir, but this is what we believe. Nothing you say can change our mind.”

Mr. Saleh begrudgingly let them go. He returned home feeling so angry.

From the top of the hill, Mr. Samin and Mr. Saleh were watching their surroundings. This was the place where the Arab Imam once stood. It was quite a high hill, allowing them to see far away.

“I cannot understand these people. They believe that what they do is a pilgrimage but it is a blasphemy. Every day, more and more people practice it and we cannot do anything,” Mr. Samin said with a sad expression.

“I know. . . I found several people yesterday, doing the same thing. Look at the grave, there are more sticks and white cloth than weeds on it,” Mr. Saleh agreed.

“I wish Imam were still among us. He would know what to do.”

“Well, it’s impossible. All we can do is keep reminding them and pray that they realize their mistakes,” Mr. Saleh continued.

“Mr. Saleh, do you notice something strange with this cemetery? By my calculation, it had exceeded its capacity. I believe that this land is only three hectares, but we surely have buried more than enough bodies to fill it?”

“Yes, I noticed that too. This land is unusual.”

They continued to discuss this matter. It was the mystery of Nurweda Village. Ever since Imam passed away, there was always a place to bury a body in the cemetery. It shouldn’t have been possible, yet it happened.

While they were talking, a speed boat was approaching the beach. They could see a group of foreigners on it. “Mr. Saleh, I believe we have more pilgrims coming.”

Mr. Saleh and Mr. Samin quickly welcomed the foreigners.

“What can we do for you, gentlemen?” Mr. Saleh asked.

“My name is John. I want to ask you something, Sir,” the foreigner introduced himself. He spoke English, mixed with broken Indonesian.

“Well, what do you want to know?” “We come from the Netherland. This is my wife, Shirena. We come here in search for the grave of my great grandfather. Our research suggested that he was buried in this island.”

“I think I know what you are looking for,” Mr. Saleh said, “Come with me.”

These foreigners were the descendant of the Dutch general who had been buried in the village decades ago. They wanted to dig up the grave because they believed that he was buried with some gold and other valuables.

“Is it possible if we dig the grave, Sir?”

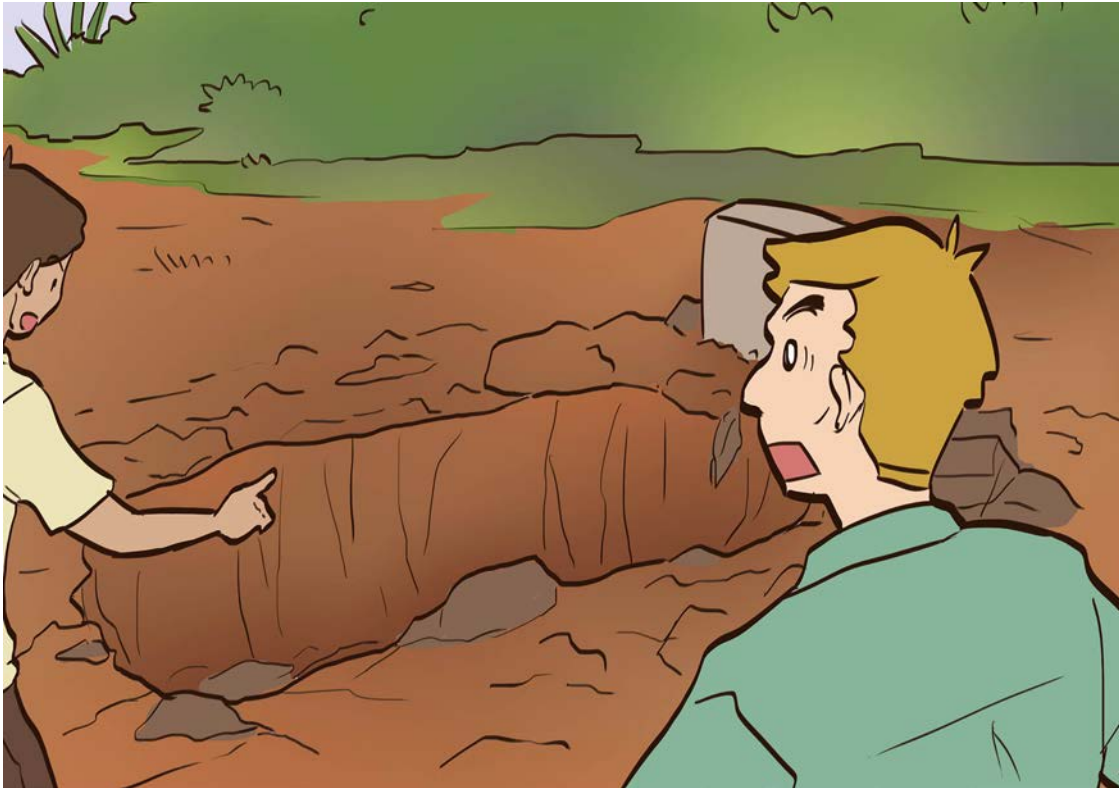
“Why do you want to do that?” Mr. Samin asked with curiosity.

“We wanted to check something.

We believe he was buried with a chest of valuables.”

“Well, since he was your relative, I don’t think I can say no. But please put everything back when you are done,” Mr. Saleh said.

“Of course, Sir. Thank you.”



Mr. John told his men to dig the grave. They dug and dug for a long time, but they found nothing inside. Even though it was clearly a grave, with tombstones sticking on the surface, the inside was not like a grave at all. The soil seemed like fresh soil that had never been dug before, let alone held a body inside. They could not find anything, not even a shard of bone, inside the grave.

“How can this happen?”

“It’s so strange! No... No... I cannot believe it.” Mr. John exclaimed over and over.

The villagers were as baffled as him. It was the first time they realized that there was something strange with the cemetery.

The village chief shook his head in disbelief and prayed to God. He was amazed.

“This has happened before, Sir,” Mr. Saleh said.

“A few years ago, there was a team of researchers who dug one of the graves. However, they found nothing. It was as if we never buried a body in this cemetery,” he continued. “I think this village is haunted. Oh, God!” Mr. John stammered.

Mr. John finally gave up and told his men to get back to their speedboat. They decided to return to the Netherland. Everyone was shocked and felt a little eerie.

The mystery of Nurweda Village, Central Halmahera Regency (North Maluku), had never been solved. Since Imam passed away, the burial area in the village was never full, even though there had been thousands of bodies being buried there. The vast and unlimited land seemed to mirror Imam’s character, who was kind, polite, respectful, and pious. Imam was a boy from Nurweda Village who always followed the teachings of his *syekh* (religious teacher).



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### **Riwayat pekerjaan/profesi (10 tahun terakhir)**

1. 2012–2014: Instruktur Lembaga Kursus (eL-Pia dan ETC)
2. 2014–2015: Pembawa Acara dan Berita Televisi Lokal (Gamalama Televisi)
3. 2015- Sekarang: Tenaga Kontrak Kantor Bahasa Provinsi Maluku Utara

## **Riwayat Pendidikan Tinggi dan Tahun Belajar**

S-1: Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Keguruan dan Pendidikan (STKIP) Kie Raha Ternate

## **Informasi Lain**

Lahir di Ternate, 25 September 1992. Ia merupakan delegasi pemuda Indonesia ke China pada tahun 2013 mewakili Provinsi Maluku Utara dalam seleksi Pertukaran Pemuda Antar Negara (PPAN). Ia menyelesaikan pendidikan dasarnya di SDN Busoiri Ternate (Sekarang SDN II) pada tahun 2004. Melanjutkan ke SMP Negeri 1 Kota Ternate hingga tahun 2007, kemudian setelah menyelesaikan pendidikan di SMK Negeri 1 Kota Ternate pada jurusan Akuntansi di tahun 2010, ia melanjutkan pendidikannya ke Sekolah Tinggi Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan (STKIP) Kie Raha Ternate hingga tahun 2015 pada Prodi Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris. Keseharian Risna merupakan seorang guru privat Bahasa Inggris. Semasa kuliahnya ia merupakan anggota debat dalam perlombaan debat bahasa Inggris baik tingkat kopertis maupun nasional, Risna merupakan tenaga kerja honorer pada tahun 2015 hingga sekarang di Kantor Bahasa Provinsi Maluku Utara.

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### **Riwayat Pekerjaan**

Tenaga fungsional umum Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa (2001—sekarang)

### **Riwayat Pendidikan**

1. S-1 Sarjana sastra dari Universitas Negeri Jember (1993—2001)
2. S-2 TESOL and FLT dari University of Canberra (2008—2009)

### **Informasi Lain**

Lahir di Padang pada tanggal 7 Oktober 1974. Aktif dalam berbagai kegiatan dan aktivitas kebahasaan, di antaranya penyuntingan bahasa, penyuluhan bahasa, dan pengajaran Bahasa Indonesia bagi Orang Asing (BIPA). Ia telah menyunting naskah dinas di beberapa instansi seperti Mahkamah Konstitusi dan Kementerian Luar Negeri.