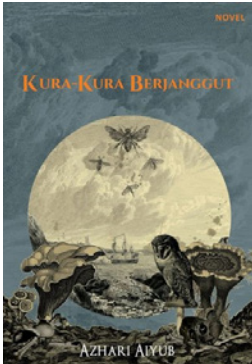


BOOK REVIEW

***Kura-kura Berjanggut***

Author: Azhari Aiyub

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An adjective is needed to describe something to facilitate recognition. ‘Sophisticated’ becomes an adjective that appears when the book titled “Kura-kura Berjanggut” is read. Although the contents of this literary work are not linear with random time series, this story is indeed worthy of winning the Khatulistiwa Literary Award in 2018 as the best prose category. Azhari Aiyub, as a writer, and Yusi Avianto Pareanom as an editor completed this 921-page novel for 12 years.

This literary work was developed from the short story “Hikayat Kura-kura Berjanggut” which was once rewarded as one of the 20 best Indonesian short stories in 2008. Some parts of this novel have also been written in a collection of short stories “Perempuan Pala” written by the same author with a different publisher. The development of a short story into a very thick book indicates how well organized between one story with another story in this book.

The storyline with the background of the Lamuri/Aceh Sultanate in the second half of the end of the 16th century contains a large number of characters as well as interrelated stories which then become the cause and effect of episodes. The flow back and forth can make the reader have difficulty if they are not familiar with historical terms related to Lamuri and the countries in the Malacca Strait. Even so, Azhari Aiyub provides a glossary arranged alphabetically and explained with sentences that are easy to understand on the last pages.

The main problem raised in this novel is international trade capitalism from a spice that was so prized in the 16th century namely pepper. The pepper trade monopoly by the trading company called Ikan Pari Itam, made the joint venture indirectly control the Lamuri sultanate including who would sit in the sultan’s seat. The

friction between the Ikan Pari Itam Trading Corporation and the Lamuri Sultanate became the beginning of conflicts that began from rebellion, adventure, as well as other stories.

This book is divided into 4 parts, namely “The Book of the Ujud”, “Diary of Tobias Fuller: The Murderers of Lamuri”, “Worm Holes”, and “Bantaqiyah Woyla Notes”. “The Book of the Ujud” makes up almost two-thirds of the entire book. This part is also the center of the story. Initially, the four parts do not appear to be related. However, after being read sequentially to the last part, the last three parts turned out to be a complement to the “The Book of the Ujud”. All three fill the space left in the first part of the story until the end of this book makes the reader feel empty because the amazing story has ended with many defeats from each character.

Ujud sought revenge on the bastard of Sultan Lamuri for killing his whole family. The journey of Ujud is the beginning of a story filled with adventure. Ujud’s desire for revenge killed Sultan Nuruddin as a bastard became the central story. The writer then ran back and forth telling him why the bastard ended up being Sultan Lamuri.

The Ikan Pari Itam trading corporation which controlled the pepper trade also controlled the Lamuri sultanate at the time. The Sultan who was ‘driven’ then began to realize it along with the presence of two women who later one of them became his wife and his advisor to carry out his sultanate’s duties. At that time the wife was already pregnant until the term of the illegitimate child appeared. The sultan’s awareness then made the Ikan Pari Itam trade corporation unhappy. The climax was the killing of the mother of sultan’s bastard named Ramla.

After the death of Ramla, the sultan’s bastard was

soon imprisoned. Fortunately, he met with those who later helped him carry out a mass rebellion against the powerful monarchs of Lamuri Sultanate and Ikan Pari Itam trade corporation. The sultan's bastard then led the reign of the sultan and turned his name into sultan Nuruddin. He did the cleaning of the whole sultanate family, also slaughtering the Ikan Pari Itam trade corporation. The rebellion and annihilation were known as the Annihilation of Paper. At that time, Ujud was studying in the Middle East so he survived and was shocked when he finds out about the Annihilation of Paper. His father, mother, and siblings were killed as his family became part of the most influential pepper trader in Lamuri. Ujud did not know who of his surviving relatives.

After the eradication of pepper occurred, Sultan Nuruddin then set up the Lamuri Sultanate and monopolized the pepper trade. He was assisted by his trusted friends who helped the rebellion from prison, also assisted by Kamaria - a witch who was one of the women who had been found by Sultan Awaludinsyah with Ramla. The prophecy from Kamaria which was handed down from Ramla helped Sultan Nuruddin to organize the empire.

The Lamuri sultanate then experienced a decisive victory. Sultan Nuruddin sought to conquer the neighboring cities, which were still dominated by the Ikan Pari Itam, and also maintained relations with the Lamuri Valley people whose farming the famous paper called the Twenty-Three Peasants.

After the overthrow of the sultan's power, it was not just the Ujud who wanted the bastard to die. The murder of the royal family and the ousting of the Ikan Pari Itam trade led to an organization called Kura-kura Berjanggung. Kura-kura Berjanggung is a circus-based killer of a circus group supported by a surviving member of the Ikan Pari Itam. They planned the assassination of the sultan with various tactics.

The tactics carried out were known by Nuruddin sultan and became an eternal pressure in the palace. The Sultan destroyed all people and organizations that were even just suspected of being part of the Kura-kura Berjanggung. The sultan's fears turned the ex-convict into a tyrant sultan. That is what makes conditions in the palace chaotic. These conditions then made the Sultan's trusted people disappear one by one. The Sultan's fears controlled and made the sultan's main goal to change the order of the Lamuri sultanate off the mark.

Ujud's journey to discover the story of the death of his family and then design the assassination of the sultan, moving many stories in which involved a lot of characters. In the end, he is not only found a way to

be close to the Sultan (then tried to find a way to kill the sultan) but also found himself. He was reunited with Kura-kura Berjanggung but did not try to become a member. The similarity of his vision and mission with Kura-kura Berjanggung is considered to be an opportunity. He could become a narrator and audience without acting rashly because his position at that time was so close to the sultan of illegitimate children. Even so, the end of the "The Book of The Ujud" section concludes with a brief conclusion. The long one is many stories that are interlocked from the blind fighting of elephants, the Elephant Act of 1960, to the war in the oceans which involved the pepper trade with colonial nations.

Unlike the first part, the second part which contains Tobias Fuller's diary is more persistent because it is arranged based on clear dates. Tobias Fuller is a psychiatrist who lives in Lamuri who then writes a diary. This diary tells about the random hunt of Lamuri against white people after reading the Kura-kura Berjanggung book. The setting of the year which took place in this second chapter was in 1913-1917. While the third part of this book contains random titles whose purpose is to fill in the footage of the stories in the previous chapter. The book then closes with "Bantaqiyah Woyla Notes" as a conclusion of the entire contents of this prose.

The characters told in this book have strange habits. It is through these strange habits that the writer can describe a character with such a strong character. The characters who played an important role in this long story involved Ujud who became the narrator in the first part of the book, Buduk, Sultan Awaludinsyah, Ramla, Sultan Nuruddin, Kamaria, Abdul Ghaffar Van Heutz, Tajul Muluk, Tobias, the Lamuri Valley people, and many more. If one of the characters told is lost, it will certainly make the slap of this story unfold.

It took time and high concentration to devour this nearly one thousand-page book. In addition to many characters and many stories, nonlinear stories make the reader need to flip through the pages and even read the previous parts. It will be easier if the reader has enough knowledge about the history of the glory of Aceh that is no longer able to be reached. The writer who came from Aceh Besar certainly has advantages that are quite beneficial to compile this story. However, that does not mean that ordinary people are not fit to read this literary work. This long historical fiction can be read as a very interesting story for ordinary people. They will feel they are reading the real history of the past of the Aceh kingdom as well as other countries in the Malacca Strait.

This literary work is so amazing that it contains dark humor. Indirectly, this book contains failures from

all parties. All the characters told in this book suffered a heartbreaking defeat. The crimes that appear in this story are always reasonable. The series of stories contained in it is enough to make the reader understand that everything happens according to the law of consequences.

In the history of literary works in Indonesia, this is the first time fiction has appeared which contains a deconstruction of history with an extraordinary thick book. His entry into the long list of Kusala Sastra should be juxtaposed with “Raden Mandasia” which also entered the long list of Kusala Sastra in the previous year. Incidentally, the author of “Raden Mandasia” is the editor of “Kura-kura Berjanggut” and comes from the same publisher.

The concept ‘nothing is perfect in this world’ flicks this book. There are quite a lot of typographical errors from this book. However, this error does not necessarily change the content of the story of Kura-kura Berjanggut.

The thickness of the book can be one reason that can be understood from the writing error that appears. Besides, as input from lay readers, it would be more interesting if Azhari Aiyub made a scheme, genealogy, as well as maps of places where the story is set to make it easier to understand. Although the glossary is sufficient to explain, the explanation of the 921-page story will be better understood through pictures especially for people who are not good in history lessons.

The string of words written by Azhari Aiyub is so subtle in this novel. Some reviews from this book even say that Azhari Aiyub can be said to be the successor of Pramudya Ananta Toer. The specificity of the sentence structure in this book has a different appeal from other literary works. The Kusala Literature award that he got in terms of the storyline as well as other technical writing matters deserves a reason for readers to read this book at least once in a lifetime.