

= Sair Tjerita Siti Akbari =

Sair Tjerita Siti Akbari ( [ ?a?ir t?e?rita si?ti ak?bari ] ; Perfected spelling : Syair Cerita Siti Akbari , Malay for Poem on the Story of Siti Akbari ; also known as Siti Akbari ) is an 1884 Malay @-@ language syair ( poem ) by Lie Kim Hok . Adapted indirectly from the Sjair Abdoel Moeloek , it tells of a woman who passes as a man to free her husband from the Sultan of Hindustan , who had captured him in an assault on their kingdom .

Written over a period of several years and influenced by European literature , Siti Akbari differs from earlier syairs in its use of suspense and emphasis on prose rather than form . It also incorporates European realist views to expand upon the genre , although it maintains several of the hallmarks of traditional syairs . Critical views have emphasised various aspects of its story , finding in the work an increased empathy for women 's thoughts and feelings , a call for a unifying language in the Dutch East Indies ( now Indonesia ) , and a polemic regarding the relation between tradition and modernity .

Siti Akbari was a commercial and critical success , seeing two reprints and a film adaptation in 1940 . When Sjair Abdoel Moeloek 's influence became clear in the 1920s , Lie was criticised as unoriginal . However , Siti Akbari remains one of the better known syairs written by an ethnic Chinese author . Lie was later styled as the " father of Chinese Malay literature " .

= = Plot = =

The Sultan of Hindustan , Bahar Oedin , is infuriated after his uncle Safi , a trader , dies while imprisoned in Barbari . As the Abdul Aidid , the Sultan of Barbari , has greater military power , Bahar Oedin bides his time and plans his revenge . Meanwhile , Abdul Aidid 's son Abdul Moelan marries his cousin , Siti Bida Undara . Two years later , after Abdul Aidid dies , Abdul Moelan goes on an extended sea voyage , leaving his wife behind .

In the nearby kingdom of Ban , Abdul Moelan meets and falls in love with Siti Akbari , daughter of the Sultan of Ban . The two soon marry and , after six months in Ban , return to Barbari . Siti Bida Undara , at first upset at the thought of sharing her husband , soon becomes close friends with Siti Akbari . Shortly thereafter Bahar Oedin takes his revenge , capturing Abdul Moelan and Siti Bida Undara . When the sultan tries to capture Siti Akbari , he discovers a body in her room and believes it to be hers . He takes his captives back to Hindustan and imprisons them .

Unknown to him , the pregnant Siti Akbari has faked her death and escaped . After several months she finds protection under Syaikh ( Sheikh ) Khidmatullah , under whose protection she gives birth . He trains her in silat ( traditional martial arts ) so she can free her husband . Leaving her son in Khidmatullah 's care , she begins her travels . When seven men accost and attempt to rape her , she kills them . Taking their clothes and cutting her hair , she disguises herself as a man and takes the name Bahara . After arriving in Barbam , she stops a war between two claimants to the region 's throne . She kills the usurper , then takes his head to the rightful heir to the throne , Hamid Lauda . In thanks Hamid Lauda rewards Siti Akbari with rule over Barbam and allows the " Bahara " to take his sister , Siti Abian , in marriage .

Siti Akbari , keeping her disguise as Bahara , leaves Barbam to go to Hindustan and recover her husband . With the help of two advisors who have found the Sultan 's disfavour , she is able to reconnoitre the area . She eventually captures Hindustan with her army , conquering the sultanate on her own , killing Bahar Oedin , and freeing Abdul Moelan and Siti Bida Undara . While still disguised , Siti Akbari repudiates Siti Abian and gives her to Abdul Moelan before revealing her true identity . The different kingdoms are then divided amongst the male protagonists , while Siti Akbari returns to her role as a wife .

= = Background and writing = =

Siti Akbari was written by Lie Kim Hok , a Bogor @-@ born peranakan Chinese who was taught by Dutch missionaries . The missionaries introduced him to European literature , including the works of

Dutch writers such as Anna Louisa Geertruida Bosboom @-@ Toussaint and Jacob van Lennep , as well as works by French authors like Jules Verne , Alexandre Dumas , and Pierre Alexis Ponson du Terrail . In his doctoral thesis , J. Francisco B. Benitez suggests that Lie may have also been influenced by Malay and Javanese oral traditions , such as the travelling bangsawan theatrical troupes or wayang puppets .

Evidence uncovered after Lie 's death in 1912 suggested that Siti Akbari was heavily influenced by the earlier Sjair Abdoel Moeloek ( 1847 ) , variously credited to Raja Ali Haji or Saleha . This tale was transliterated by Arnold Snackey , then later translated into Sundanese . Sources disagree on the translator . The documentarian Christiaan Hooykaas , writing in a letter to literary critic Nio Joe Lan , suggested that Lie 's inspiration had come from a version of Sjair Abdoel Moeloek held in the Royal Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences Library in Batavia . Biographer Tio le Soei , meanwhile , suggested that the version which inspired Lie was translated in 1873 by Lie 's teacher , Sierk Coolsma . According to Tio , Coolsma had based his translation off a stage performance and written it hurriedly , such that it was nearly illegible . As he had better handwriting , Lie purportedly copied the story for Coolsma and kept the original in his own collection . The literary historian Monique Zaini @-@ Lajoubert writes that none of these intermediary versions has been found .

Work on Siti Akbari was completed over a period of several years . Lie stated that the story had taken him three years , writing sporadically . Tio , however , reports rumours that the writing took some seven years , with Lie sometimes taking long breaks and sometimes writing in a fervor , writing from dawn until dusk .

= = Style = =

The literary critic G. Koster writes that , when writing Siti Akbari , Lie Kim Hok was limited by the formulaic Pandji romances and syair poems common in Malay literature at the time . Koster notes basic structural similarities between Siti Akbari and the existing poetic forms . The work followed the archetype of a hero or heroine going from a lawful kingdom into exile then into a chaotic kingdom , one which Koster suggests is representative of the cycle of oral law . Such an archetype and formulas were used in contemporary works such as Syair Siti Zubaidah Perang Cina ( Poem on Siti Zubaidah and the War against China ) . The plot device of a woman passing herself as a man to do war was likewise common in Malay and Javanese literature . Lie deviated greatly from the established traditions , mixing European and native literary influences .

The story consists of 1 @, @ 594 monorhymic quatrains divided into two couplets , with each couplet consisting of two lines , and each line consisting of two half @-@ lines separated by a caesura . Most of these lines are complete syntactic units , either clauses or sentences . Koster notes that the form is freer than in more traditional works , and as a result it becomes a sort of prose poem . An unnamed narrator tells the story from a third @-@ person omniscient perspective ; unlike most contemporary works , the narrator " assumes authority on his own account " by putting himself and his ideas forth , rather than acting as an uninvolved party .

Siti Akbari differs from contemporary works by introducing a feeling of suspense . Koster gives the identity of the Hindustani trader as an example : the man 's identity as the uncle of the Sultan is not revealed until after it is convenient for the story . Koster describes the period in which a reader believes Siti Akbari to be dead , which spans several pages , as the work 's most remarkable break from tradition . He notes that unlike most contemporary works , the syair begins with a quote , rather than an invocation to Allah . This quote is eventually shown as a fulfilled prophecy :

Koster sees effects of realism , especially the idealistic realism held at the time in the Netherlands , in the work . He notes that motives and causality are given more weight in the narrative than in most contemporary works . He observes that this is also reflected in the characters , who ? although royalty and holy men ? were given the traits of persons one could find in real @-@ life Batavia ( now Jakarta ) . The use of punctuation , another trait uncommon in the local literature of the time , may also have served to give a more realistic reading and reflected the work 's origin as a written manuscript and not from oral literature . Tio le Soei described the work 's rhythm as more akin to speech than song .

= = Themes = =

Benitez writes that the market in *Siti Akbari* " provides possibilities for exchange and connections " between persons of all cultures and backgrounds , connecting them . He describes this a representation of the heteroglossia offered by bazaar Malay , which had originated in the markets . As Lie also wrote a grammar of bazaar Malay , Benitez suggests that Lie may have hoped for the dialect to become a lingua franca in the Dutch East Indies .

Benitez considers the poem to highlight the tensions between the " monadic and autonomous subjectivity " of European culture and the " social subjectivity " of adat , or tradition , with the character of *Siti Akbari* " a site of instability that makes manifest both the possibilities of social transformation , as well as the anxiety over the possibility of social reproduction gone awry " . As an individual , she is able to fight her enemies and reclaim her husband . Ultimately , however , she chooses to return to her polygamous relationship with Abdul Moelan , an affirmation of tradition over modernism . In opposition to *Siti Akbari* , the trader Safi Oedin refuses to live in accordance with the local customs while he is in a foreign land and ultimately dies . Benitez writes that this " may be read as a warning to those who refuse to live in accordance with local adat . " Koster notes that ? as usual with syairs ? *Siti Akbari* works to increase awareness of adat and traditional value systems .

Zaini @-@ Lajoubert opines that the story promotes a treatment of women as persons with feelings and opinions , as opposed to the patriarchal view common during the period that women were unfeeling objects . She finds that the story 's female characters feel grief and joy , quoting several passages , including one where *Siti Akbari* confesses that she felt she had waited " dozens of years " for Abdul Moelan . Zaini @-@ Lajoubert notes that the female characters are not all of the same opinion : although *Siti Akbari* was willing to enter a polygamous relationship , *Siti Bida Undara* had to be coaxed . Ultimately , however , she finds that *Siti Akbari* conveys the message that women should be faithful and obedient to their husbands .

= = Reception and legacy = =

*Siti Akbari* was first published in four volumes in 1884 . It proved to be Lie 's most popular work , and received the most reprints out of any of his publications . The first reprinting was in 1913 by Hoa Siang In Kiok , and the second was in 1922 by Kho Tjeng Bie . Both of these new printings consisted of a single volume , and , according to Tio , contained numerous inaccuracies .

The story was well received by readers , and although Lie was not the only ethnic Chinese to write in the traditionally Malay poetry form of syair , he became one of the more accomplished . Lie considered it amongst his best works . Writing in 1923 , Kwee Tek Hoay ? himself a proficient author ? wrote that he had been fascinated by the story as a child , to the point he had " memorised more than half of its contents by heart " . Kwee considered it " full of good maxims and advice " unavailable elsewhere . Nio Joe Lan described it as the " jewel of Chinese Malay poetry " , of far higher quality than other Chinese @-@ written Malay poems ? both contemporary and subsequent .

The story was adapted for the stage soon after publication , when it was performed by a group named *Siti Akbari* under Lie 's leadership . Lie also made a simplified version for a troupe of teenaged actors , whom he led in Bogor . In 1922 the Sukabumi branch of the Shiong Tih Hui published another stage adaptation under the title *Pembalesan Siti Akbari* ( *Revenge of Siti Akbari* ) ; by 1926 it was being performed by Miss Riboet 's Orion , a theatrical troupe led by Tio Tek Djien . The story remained popular well into the late 1930s . It likely inspired Joshua and Othniel Wong 's 1940 film *Siti Akbari* , starring Roekiah and Rd . Mochtar . The extent of this influence is uncertain , and the film is likely lost .

Lie continued experimenting with European @-@ style prose . In 1886 he published *Tjhit Liap Seng* ( *Seven Stars* ) , which Claudine Salmon of the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences describes as the first Chinese Malay novel . Lie went on to publish another four novels , as well as several translations . When ethnic Chinese writers became common in the early 1900s , critics

named Lie the " father of Chinese Malay literature " for his contributions , including Siti Akbari and Tjhit Liap Seng .

After the rise of the nationalist movement and the Dutch colonial government 's efforts to use Balai Pustaka to publish literary works for native consumption , the work began to be marginalised . The Dutch colonial government used Court Malay as a " language of administration " , a language for everyday dealings , while the Indonesian nationalists appropriated the language to help build a national culture . Chinese Malay literature , written in " low " Malay , was steadily marginalised . Benitez writes that , as a result , there has been little scholarly analysis of Siti Akbari . Despite this , sinologist Leo Suryadinata wrote in 1993 that Siti Akbari has remained one of the best @-@ known syairs written by an ethnic Chinese .

= = Criticism = =

Although both Sjair Abdoel Moeloek and Siti Akbari were often performed on stage , the similarities between the two were not discovered for several years . Zaini @-@ Lajoubert writes that Tio le Soei uncovered these similarities while working as a journalist for the Chinese Malay newspaper Lay Po in 1923 . Kwee Tek Hoay followed this article with another discussion of the work 's origins in 1925 . Later writers criticised Lie 's other works as blatant adaptations . Tan Soey Bing and Tan Oen Tjeng , for instance , wrote that none of his works were original . Tio le Soei , in response , stated that Lie had changed the stories he had adapted , and thus shown originality .

In exploring the similarities between Sjair Abdoel Moeloek and Siti Akbari , Zaini @-@ Lajoubert notes that the names of the individual kingdoms , save Barham ( Barbam in Siti Akbari ) , are taken directly from the earlier work . Names of characters , such as Abdul Muluk ( in Siti Akbari , Abdul Moelan ) and Siti Rapihah ( Siti Akbari ) , are simply replaced , although some minor characters are present in one story and not the other . The main plot elements in both stories are the same ; some elements , such as the birth and childhood of Abdul Muluk and the later adventures of Siti Rapihah 's son , are present in one story and not the other ? or given more detail . The two differ greatly in their styles , especially Lie 's emphasis on description and realism .