

# **Three stories originating from the To Lalaki**

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## LANGUAGES

Subject language : Tolaki  
Language of materials : English

## DESCRIPTION

Three folktales from the Tolaki area of southeastern Sulawesi, Indonesia, are retold in English.

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I. Why the carabao is missing a few teeth; II. Who now would want to marry an ape!; III. Why so many To Lalaki have ichthyosis; References.

## SOURCE

Treffers, F. 1913. Drie verhalen afkomstig van de To Lalaki. *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 55:230–233. Original pagination is indicated by enclosing the page number in brackets, e.g. [p. 230].

## VERSION HISTORY

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### I.

#### Why the carabao is missing a few teeth.

One day, a man who had just caught a wild rooster met a large snake. The snake wouldn't let the man pass, but dared him on to fight, so that they might know which of them should be master of the forest. The man was in reality afraid to fight the snake, so he devised of a trick. He let on that he had not yet eaten, and would like to do that first. Thinking this was a good idea, the snake also wanted to have something to eat. This was precisely the man's intention, and he gave his rooster to the snake. When the snake had eaten the rooster, it fell asleep. Quickly the man cut off two forked branches and stuck these into the ground in front and in back of the bulge in the snake's body, where the rooster was. Then the man woke the snake, who was now unable to move either forward or backward, so that the man was easily able to finish it off.

A carabao, who had seen what had happened, began to laugh so loudly at the man's trick that he hit his jaw against a branch, knocking out a few teeth. And to this day he is still missing those teeth.<sup>1</sup>

### II.

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#### Who now would want to marry an ape!

Once upon a time there was an old woman who lived alone in a hut in her small cornfield. One day, inside came a big ape, who said he wanted to live with her. The woman, who was not fond of having visitors, but at the same time was afraid of the ape, made him understand that she had so little corn that by a long shot there wouldn't be enough for the two of them. "Don't be afraid," said the ape. "I will make sure that you are not short of anything." So the ape remained with the old woman a long time; and no matter how much

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<sup>1</sup> [translator's note: In regard to water buffalo tooth anatomy, I would assume that the 'missing teeth' refer to the large gap (diastema) on the lower jaw between the front teeth (incisors and incisor-like canines) and the cheek teeth (premolars and molars). Such a gap on the lower jaw is characteristic not only of water buffaloes but of bovids generally. However, could the 'missing teeth' refer instead to the dental pad which replaces the upper front teeth in water buffalo?]

corn he took from the field, there was never a lack, because new corn kept on growing in its place.

One day, the ape approached the old woman. "I want to get married," he said. "Then you'll have to return to the forest," she replied, not understanding him well. "No," said the ape. "I want to marry a woman from this part of the country." The old woman had to laugh: "Who now would want to marry an ape!" But the ape stood his ground, and as a last resort the woman went to the rajah and made the ape's plan known. "Who now would want to marry an ape!" scoffed the rajah. But at the insistence of the ape, however, the rajah made the ape's desires known; but all the young women said, "Who now would want to marry an ape!" At last the rajah said, "I have seven daughters; ask if any of them is willing to marry the ape." The six eldest said, "Who now would want to marry an ape!" But the seventh, who was sick with ichthyosis, said, "Very well, I shall. I am so ugly that no man will have me. I should just as well marry the ape."

So it became resolved that the youngest daughter of the rajah would marry the ape, and as customary a curtain was hung over the young couple's bed. In the evening, however, the ape immediately laid himself down to sleep. The young woman was much grieved about this, but the ape said, "Just wait until morning," whereupon she also fell asleep. Early the next morning the ape arose and descended the staircase to go bathe in the river. As he went, however, his ape skin fell off, and he returned as a handsome young man, elegantly dressed and wearing many golden ornaments. When he again had come into his father-in-law's house, he could barely [p. 232] move, so close were the other daughters of the rajah pushing up against him. Whereupon he exclaimed, "Now they would like to marry an ape!"

The above story No. II is widespread in Indonesia. A version in Bare'e can be found on pp. 45–50 of *Leesboek in de Bare'e-taal*, published in 1909 (Landsdrukkerij, Batavia). A translation of it can be found in volume 52 of this journal, pp. 225–232; on the last-named page one will also find an index of parallels to this story which have already been made known. (N. ADRIANI).

### III.

#### **Why so many To Lalaki have ichthyosis.<sup>2</sup>**

A certain chief had a young and very beautiful daughter. She was so beautiful, that her parents didn't want her to be seen by any men, because she was still so young. She was, therefore, closely watched over, and only one time a year was she allowed to go bathe in the river, and then only with a sizable escort and with many precautions taken so that no one should spy her.

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<sup>2</sup> [translator's note: Dutch also *ichthyosis*, but possibly some other skin disease is intended.]

On a certain day, when it was again time for her to go and bathe, she saw an orange floating in the water, which she took and ate while bathing. After some months, people saw that she was pregnant. Everyone was very astonished about this, and her parents asked the girl's watchers what had happened. They explained, however, that nothing had happened. The last time she had gone to bathe, she had eaten an orange, but there had been no one in the neighborhood. And she couldn't get pregnant from eating an orange! Since the parents also didn't know how it could have happened, they decided just to wait, and watch over her even more sternly.

When the day of her delivery came, she gave birth to a young crocodile. At first everyone wanted to let it die, but the daughter herself resisted against it, and so the crocodile became assimilated [p. 233] into the house like a child. He grew up and remained with the people in the house; but once he had gotten old, he became sick and died.

At first no one dared venture to throw him in the river. Over time, people gradually became attached to him, so that by no means were they going to cast him in the river. They resolved, then, that they should just hang him up in the house behind the fireplace, where he completely dried up.

A long time after that, when the chief and his daughter were dead, someone from another region came and lived in the house. Now, the crocodile behind the fireplace annoyed him. There was nothing left of it other than a completely shriveled skin. The man took it intending to bring it outside to the river, but on the way the skin fell completely apart. The two biggest pieces became the snake and the lizard; the rest, however, fell apart into small pieces, which were spread everywhere by the wind. To this day, they lie everywhere on the way, and anyone who steps on such a piece is certain to get scale-sickness (ichthyosis).

KENDARI, June 1912.

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