



THE LEGEND OF
PRINCESS
SA'ADONG



Intricate wood carvings around Istana Jahar



Sultan Ismail Petra Arch

Puteri or Princess Sa'adong is famed for her unrivalled beauty due to her magical origin. She was found by Kelantan's legendary warrior Queen, Che' Siti Wan Kembang at the edge of a pond, wrapped in pure white bubbles. Childless, the Queen adopted the baby and before long, was teaching her the virtues of a respectable warrior and a beloved ruler.

When she came of age, she was betrothed to her cousin, Raja Abdullah and once married, they ruled over the *Kota Jelasin* (Fort Jelasin) region. But peace was soon shattered as the Siamese King waged war against the region for rejecting his marriage proposal to Princess Sa'adong. Dreadfully defeated by the compelling force of Siamese troops, and refusing to expose her subjects to further atrocities, Princess Sa'adong surrendered. Before making the crossing to Siam, she assured her husband and her subjects that she will return unharmed.

After months of arduous journey, the princess finally arrived at the Siamese King's Palace and he was overjoyed. Unfortunately, when he touched her, he was instantly inflicted with a terrible skin disease. Many local shamans tried to cure the disease but failed. One night, the King dreamt only Princess Sa'adong had the power to cure him. The Princess agreed to cure the King if he allowed her to return to Kelantan. He consented, and using the juice from a betel nut that she chewed, the Princess healed the King.

As promised, Princess Sa'adong returned to her husband only to find him married to another. Hurt by his betrayal, she fled to *Bukit Marak* (Marak Hill) and sought refuge in a cave at the mount. Nevertheless, she never abandoned her subjects. Frequently they came to seek her advice and assistance. She was so kind that her subjects constantly took advantage of her.



Raja Abdullah's headstone

Istana Jahar





The mouth of the Princess' cave



Raja Abdullah's tomb

Many came to borrow her crockery for various feasts yet failed to return them. Disappointed with dishonesty in the world she withdrew, according to local legend, into the mystical world. When she departed, all her belongings like her crockery and ship mysteriously turned into stones. Realising their mistakes, the villagers returned her transformed belongings to the only place they knew, at the cave in *Bukit Marak*. Today, locals claim remnants of Puteri Sa'adong's possessions can still be found in the cave.

Visitors to Kelantan can visit several sites that are related to Puteri Sa'adong's legend. The tomb of her husband, Raja Abdullah, is located at Kampung Padang Halban, 20km south of Kota Bharu. He died in 1671, some believed killed during a fight with Princess Sa'adong. She stabbed him with her golden hairpin.

Located 20 kilometres east of Kota Bharu, the cave at *Bukit Marak* is accessible only to expert cavers and hardcore explorers. It contains remnants of her belongings, chambers deemed to be her bedrooms and even her footsteps. To experience the grandeur of past Kelantanese royalty, pay a visit to *Istana Jahar* (*Jahar Palace*) also known as the *Museum of Royal Traditions and Customs*. Opens Saturdays through Thursdays from 8.30am to 4.45pm.

Istana Balai Besar, located at the heart of Kota Bharu, stands proudly surrounded by a fort, made from beautifully crafted local timber, within an area that covers over 1627sq metres.

The main entrance of Istana Balai Besar

