

**DATU DIYANG**  
*Kisah Datu Diyang*

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**Language Development and Cultivation Agency**  
**Ministry of Education and Culture**  
**Republic of Indonesia**  
**2018**

## **DATU DIYANG**

Translated from  
***Kisah Datu Diyang***  
written by Siti Akbari  
published by  
Language Development and Cultivation Agency  
Ministry of Education and Culture  
in 2016

This translation has been published as the result of the translation program organized  
by The Center for Language Strategy and Diplomacy Development,  
Language Development and Cultivation Agency, Ministry of Education and Culture  
in 2018

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## DATU DIYANG

### The Lanting House

Far far away, a simple house stood on a big raft which looked simple but warm. Behind the ajar door, everything was clean and tidily organized. The house was well ventilated with windows on all sides: right, left, front, and back.

In front of the *lanting* (house on a raft) was a pile of wicker, ready to be used. There were also *tanggui*, mats, and baskets, well piled up, ready to be marketed. On the sides of the house were seedbeds in lines and various seedlings: tree seedlings, medicinal herb seedlings, and cooking spice seedlings. A young woman was busy separating the roots of water hyacinth from their stems. Beside her were two piles, one was a pile of water hyacinth roots and the other a pile of their stems. When a clump of water hyacinth passed by the raft, carried by the stream, she would stand at once and took a long pole, directing its tip to the clump and driving it close to the raft and pulled it with all her might to her front. She looked happy to see the pile of water hyacinth roots in front of her, shiny black under the sunshine. The green leaves of the fresh ones looked fresh green with their purple flowers emerging from among the clusters. Occasionally she wiped her sweats with the tip of her shirt sleeves. Thinking about filling her

plant pots with water hyacinth roots made her tireless. Had it not been for her mother's call from the *tabing* (land on the river bank), she would have been busy with her water hyacinth much longer.

“Yang! If you have got much already, get on land quickly,” said her mother, “and carry a bucket of water, will you?”

“Yes, Mom,” replied the young woman. She tidied the pile of the water hyacinth at once and put the long pole beside the *lanting*. She took the water hyacinth roots inside the rattan basket, while the stems were let spread on the *lanting* floor so they would get dry quickly. She closed the front door of *lanting* and headed towards the *tabing*. The rattan basket containing the water hyacinth was under her armpit. She did not forget to bring a bucket of water in her right hand. She walked steadily on the wooden bridge connecting the *lanting* with the river bank adjacent to it.

The floor plank of the *lanting* seemed to be in a unity with her feet as she took every step with firmness without being shaky. Carrying such weight with her did not make her look tired.

### **Diyang and Her Mother**

On the *tabing*, an aging mother was sitting by a heap of sago palm leaves by her side, thatching sago palm leaves to be made house roof. Her mouth kept moving, chewing betel nut and

leaves. Both corners of her mouth looked red. Occasionally she spat to the *peludahan* on her left side. *Peludahan* is a special container for spitting, normally filled with sand or earth. When the betel leaves turned tasteless, she threw it. Then she took the *panginangan* beside her. *Panginangan* is where the betel nuts and betel leaves are kept. She took two pieces of betel leaves, smeared them with lime and strewed gambier she already ground with her fingers. She also mixed it with a slice of betel nut as well as tobacco. Then she folded it and put it into her mouth.

“Has *Zuhur* time come, Diyang?” asked the mother as she saw her daughter already on the *tabing*. *Zuhur* is the Islamic midday prayer.

“Not yet, Mom,” replied Diyang. While her mother continued arranging the sago palm leaves, Diyang put the water hyacinth roots on the ground beside the house before pouring the water she brought into the water container on the side verandah for ablution, then she went to the kitchen to prepare lunch.

Today, Diyang’s mother did not go marketing her handicrafts and her garden’s products. She usually went to the market twice a week carrying some products from the garden and a few of the handicrafts. She had done it from her maiden days. Very early morning she carried her merchandise in a boat she rowed herself. On the place where tributaries met, she would stop and waited, along with some other people around the place on their own

floating boats. There they would barter their merchandises. Diyang's father had passed away. He used to take care of the garden when he was still alive. Diyang, being the only daughter among several children, accompanied her mother at home. Now it was Diyang's husband who took care of the family garden. Diyang and her husband used to stay in the *lanting*, but after Diyang's father passed away, they moved to the house to accompany her mother.

After cooking, Diyang joined her mother to give her a hand, tidying the scattering stuff. She was not too skillful in arranging *rumbia* leaves, so she preferred watering and taking care of the plants in the pots.

Diyang was good at growing plants and she had a natural talent in it. Perhaps it was due to her care and mercy that the plants grew well. The seedlings became green trees in the garden which was under her husband's care. Care and mercy had internalized in her soul. She had learnt much about love and mercy from her mother and father. The gentleness and softness of her mother's character had been reflected in her beautiful character.

### **The Merciful Diyang**

Getting up early morning, Diyang prepared herself, prayed Subuh or morning prayer, and did many things afterwards. She prepared breakfast and provisions for the family members, helped her

mother preparing to bring her merchandise to Lok Baintan. She also prepared her husband's provision for working in the field until midday. After her mother and her husband had left, she did the house chores and watered the plants in the pots which were arranged nicely. She then fed the chickens, the ducks, and the fish that she kept. Even ownerless cats were fed in her house. She did all that with pleasure which made her enjoy her days. She ignored the rolling sweats on her forehead and neck. She enjoyed her activities. She would occasionally caress her plants and animals. Her radiant face looked as if she would talk to them, "Grow, grow, my plants," which she whispered to the plants. To the chickens she whispered, "Grow well, my chickens. Give us big and healthy eggs."

She believed that the plants and the animals needed her care, love, and mercy. By giving, one will be given. Therefore, Diyang always wanted to share, even with her farm animal. She believed, if she took care of them well, they would grow well in turn. Tidying the house was one of her favourite activities. To her, a tidy and clean house needed special attention. The tidiness and cleanliness would not only make a healthy house environment, but they would also become a good care for healthy body and mind. Besides her activities to take care of the house, she also liked helping other people. The people in her village knew it well. Her helping hands were always ready for anyone needing help. She also never felt hesitant to help those who needed with her

wealth. She often helped others with her knowledge and skill in plants and concocting medicine from the available plants. She acquired the knowledge and skill from her father.

In his lifetime, her father had used to be respected and regarded in the village. People would often come to him for consultation on many affairs. He had a skill to recognize medicinal plants. Her father was so famous with his skill that some said that the plants told him of their medicinal potential. Realizing the potential in the plants had made her love her plants even more. Moreover she had knowledge in concocting plants into medicine. Her skill had motivated her to devote her attention to the plants. Her keenness on planting different plants, especially spices, and her skill on concocting herbal medicine were really beneficial. She was often requested to help sick people around her village. She even helped with baby delivery. She was often called because nobody else was available, and the midwife was quite at a distance, which made it difficult to tend the delivering woman immediately. However, she objected to be called a midwife. In her mind, she was only a helping neighbour, not a midwife. Her eagerness to help and her skill in concocting medicine made her beloved of the villagers. She was often sent gifts in the form of food by her villagers although she never expected such gifts. Helping others made her happy.



Diyang was a merciful woman. She loved all creatures of Allah. To her, happiness was to make other people happy, especially those who were close to her. Therefore, she won other people's love as she loved others.

Her love for her mother made her a grateful child to her mother. To Diyang, her parents' happiness was also her happiness, and their sadness was hers, too. Therefore, she never argued with her mother. Moreover, after her father passed away, she felt that her mother the single parent whom she had to always love. She would not be able to see her mother's tears rolling down her cheeks.

### **Diyang, The Medicine Concocter**

It rained heavily the previous night. The soil was wet. Raindrops still remained on the thick leaves of the plants. The atmosphere was cool and fresh. Fish splashed around on the water edge, making small waves like a spread of silk caressed by winds. From the house window, some children could be seen playing while swimming in the river. Their faces did not betray the water coldness, yet they laughed happily as they played hide and seek among the trees and *lanting* houses. Looking at them, Diyang just smiled.

She was enjoying her morning tea and some fried banana with her husband and her mother. Today her mother and her husband just stayed at home.

“Hmmm.... Your fried banana is really tasty, my dear wife,” complimented her husband. Diyang replied bashfully, “Ah, that’s because the banana was well ripened. You brought it from the garden,” she said modestly. Her mother nodded her head. She was happy to see the couple in front of her. She was thankful and felt that she did not take a wrong choice for her daughter’s husband. She shared her daughter’s happiness. Suddenly there was a knock on the front door. Diyang headed for the door immediately and she opened it.

“Assalamualaikum,” said the person who knocked at the door.

“Walaikumussalam,” replied Diyang.

“Excuse me for disturbing. We need some help. Our little child has been crying since last night,” said the guest.

“Wait a moment. I’ll come to your house,” said Diyang to the guest. As the guest went home, Diyang returned inside the house and took permission from her husband and her mother. After getting permission, she left immediately. She did not forget to uproot some plants from the pots. Then she headed to the neighbour’s house. Their house was not far from hers. When she reached their house, she greeted them.

“Assalamualaikum!” greeted Diyang as she came at the front of the opened door.

“Walaikumussalam, please enter, Diyang,” a female voice replied from inside. As Diyang entered the house, she saw a two-year old child on her mother’s lap. Her face looked swollen from excessive crying. She held the child and touched her stomach. It was hot and bloated.

“Last night she just vomitted and defecated several times,” said the mother.

Hearing it, Diyang asked for some ingredients to make a concoction. She ground some garlic and *kencur* (a medicinal galingale), and she mixed them with a few drops of coconut oil. The concoction was then used to cover the child’s navel. Then Diyang caressed the child’s body and smeared a mixture of shallot, coconut oil, and a little kerosene on her body. The child looked calmer on her mother’s lap and soon fell asleep. “If she wakes up, cover her navel with this concoction again,” said Diyang handing over the mixture of garlic and *kencur*. “You need to pay attention to her food several days ahead.

For the time being, you have to be very careful. Oh ya.... Keep providing boiled water. Make sure when you boil water, it should be boiling,” said Diyang.

“Is there any special concoction for her quick recovery?” asked the mother.

“For now, make sure she doesn’t dehydrate,” said Diyang. “Don’t forget in the future to make the children accustomed to drinking boiled water. The habit will at least minimize the chance for the children to get sick,” said Diyang to the mother.

“Yes, Diyang, thank you,” said the mother.

“You’re welcome,” said Diyang and took leave.

### **Diyang Was Taken to the Unseen World**

That day, as usual, Diyang did her daily chores. A few minutes after she finished, she daydreamt. She was thinking about her family life which had been years, but they had no child yet. She had a bitter experience of having a miscarriage once.

Suddenly, between awake and dreaming, she heard someone calling her name. It was a faint female voice calling her from up the *tabing*. ‘It sounds like my mother,’ she thought, ‘but isn’t my mother going to Lok Baintan today?’ However, she responded immediately. After closing the door of the *lanting*, she went up the *tabing*.

As she came up the *tabing*, she looked for the source of the voice. Suddenly an old mother was by her side.

“Daughter,” said the mother surprising her. “I need some help. My daughter is going to deliver her baby,” requested the mother.

“But I am not a midwife, mother,” said Diyang.

“Please, daughter,” pleaded the mother.

Still wondering where the mother came from, Diyang felt very uncertain. However, despite her uncertainty, she just followed the woman, who led her out of her village. She was bewildered to see the path they were walking through. She thought she had never walked there before. She could not ask any question out of bewilderment; besides, the woman walked in a great hurry. Diyang felt that they had walked quite far, but the woman never released her hold on her hand.

The woman stopped as they came to a house. She was invited inside into a room. In the room, two women were preparing everything for the delivery. There was a tray covered with a cloth where the baby would be laid upon, underneath which some uncooked rice was scattered. On the bed lay a woman who was struggling in childbirth pain.

Diyang approached her. She told her to take a deep breath. Like a well-trained midwife, she helped the woman with the delivery skillfully. A few moments later, the baby was born easily. Diyang immediately handled the newborn baby. She cleaned the baby with cloth prepared for that. On certain parts, on the skinfolds of the baby, there were still layers of fat. They looked sticky. “Excuse me! Could you get me some coconut oil and a small

plate?” she requested from a woman sitting next to her. The woman took some coconut oil from the kitchen. As soon as she got the coconut oil and the small plate, she poured the oil into the small plate and slowly rubbed the oil on to the baby’s body, caressing and massaging certain parts of the baby’s body. As soon as the baby was clean, Diyang handed over the baby to her grandmother who looked very happy. She complimented Diyang profusely and handed the baby over to her father so he could call *azan* (prayer’s call. Calling *azan* on a newborn baby is recommended in Islamic tradition) on her ears. After helping with the delivery and cleaning the baby’s mother, Diyang was invited to take a rest and enjoy the provided refreshment. After taking a few bites, Diyang took leave as she remembered the chores she had not finished. Hearing Diyang taking leave, the woman, who had picked up Diyang earlier, went inside the room and took a parcel which she handed over to Diyang.

“This is a gift for you for helping with my granddaughter’s delivery,” said the woman handing over the parcel.

“No, mother. I don’t expect a gift, and what’s more, I am not a real midwife,” said Diyang refusing the gift courteously.

“Don’t refuse. This is your share,” insisted the woman.

As the woman insisted that she take the gift, Diyang’s headscarf fell. “Astaghfirullah,” said Diyang in reflex. Suddenly the floor

where she stood changed. Obviously she was still standing on her own house terrace. She was perplexed. Then she realized that she had had a journey to the unseen world.

“Alhamdulillah, I have returned to my own world,” muttered Diyang thankfully. As she looked around, it was already afternoon. She entered her house at once and saw her mother sobbing. “What’s up, mom?” she asked her mother. Her mother was startled and immediately rushed to hug her.

“Alhamdulillah, Diyang, you have returned,” said her mother. “Where on earth have you been?” reproached her mother.

“Your husband and the villagers are searching for you. We are all upset as none of the neighbours has seen you today,” said her mother still sobbing.

Diyang narrated her experience to her mother and to some other neighbours who came over to listen to her experience. Diyang told them from the beginning to the end what she had just undergone.

“That’s how it happened, mom,” said Diyang finishing her story. “What makes me perplexed is the woman who picked me up was the woman whom I’ve seen so many times in my dreams,” added Diyang.

“Is it true, daughter?” asked her mother attesting her dream.

“Yes, mom. The woman came into my dreams and taught me how to handle a baby delivery,” said Diyang to her mother.

“The woman in my dream taught me everything I have to prepare for a baby delivery. And when I touched the woman in the unseen, I felt something different. My hand didn’t seem to be my hand in the real world,” added Diyang. Diyang’s Mother just nodded her head as she listened to Diyang’s story. She understood that her daughter had been given something special to be a midwife.

“Daughter, that’s a sign that you were given an ability to help in baby delivery. Before you, your great grandmother, according to your father’s parents, was famous in assisting baby delivery and helping to cure sick people,” said Diyang’s mother caressing Diyang’s hands.

“But, Mother, I am not ready yet, because we haven’t been given a child,” said Diyang sadly. Diyang’s mother understood Diyang’s feeling.

She had experienced herself what Diyang was experiencing, waiting for a child for a long time. However, she did not want her daughter to refuse becoming a midwife just because she had not had a child.

“My Daughter, helping others is a kind of act of worship with never ending reward, insha Allah,” Diyang’s mother advised her



daughter. Diyang just kept silent. She was trying to digest her mother's advice which sounded soothing to her heart.

The day turned dark. One by one, the villagers took leave. They felt relieved to see Diyang return. Diyang took a shower and had a rest as soon as all the people went home.

### **Diyang's Worry**

One night, after Diyang's experience in the unseen, Diyang looked gloomy. She was unaware that her husband was observing her. Seeing his wife depressed, her husband approached her quietly. He understood what disturbed his wife's mind. As soon as he was beside his wife, he touched her gently.

"How are you today, my dear wife?" he greeted his wife, interrupting his wife's daydreaming.

"Alhamdulillah, I am fine, my dear hubby," said Diyang turning her face towards her husband and hiding her melancholy. "How about you, my dear hubby?" Diyang asked her husband in return.

"Alhamdulillah, I am fine, too," replied her husband.

"My dear wife, in the garden the rambutan trees have now borne fruits, some fruits on certain branches are ready to be plucked," said her husband.

"Really?" asked Diyang with radiant face.

“Yes,” said her husband. “But, to pick ripe rambutans I will need your help. Tomorrow, if you don’t mind going with me to the garden, I’ll choose the ripe fruits to pick,” continued her husband. Diyang simpered hearing her husband’s request. Before Diyang replied, her husband said, “Today I saw a boy fall from a rambutan tree!”

“Really?” asked Diyang.

“Yes!” replied her husband.

“So how’s the boy?” asked Diyang with a worried face.

“Fortunately, the branch he fell from was not too high, so perhaps just a little bit traumatic,” continued her husband.

“Thank God. Nevertheless, he has to be taken to a masseur,” said Diyang pitifully.

Her husband understood Diyang’s attention to the falling boy that he had told. He understood well how concerned his wife was with other people’s welfare. Hearing the story about someone falling made her surprised and sad.

“I happened to see the boy and immediately went to help him because from our garden, I didn’t see the boy rise for a long while. I took him to his parents’ hut which was not far from there.”

“What happened to the boy? Did he faint? Or worse still, did he sprained his ankle?” asked Diyang curiously.

“Initially I had thought as what you just said, moreover the boy was just quiet as I took him to his parents’ hut. Obviously he was quiet because he was still enjoying the rambutan in his mouth!”

“It seems that the rambutan was so sweet that he forgot and fell, doesn’t it?” commented Diyang with a smile. “He shouldn’t have eaten the fruit on the tree,” she said again.

“That’s why I asked you to accompany me picking rambutan,” said her husband. “If I pick the fruit while looking at which ones should be picked, I’m afraid, I will have the same fate as the boy,” said her husband.

“You’ve always got something! As long as you’re willing to wait for me, I’m ready to go with you to the garden to pick rambutan,” agreed Diyang. She understood that her husband invited her to garden because he wanted to comfort her, so her gloomy face turned cheerful.

“Now my wife’s face is lovable to see,” teased her husband.

“Thank you, my dear hubby,” said Diyang looking at her husband’s face. “Thank you for telling me the story.

It reminds me that I shouldn’t ignore something because I’m too focused on something else,” said Diyang. “Like looking for ripe

rambutan while there is still rambutan in the mouth, then forgetting the foothold,” she continued.

“That’s right, my dear wife. Don’t let yourself be carried by the fact that we haven’t got any child. Keep a good faith in the Almighty. There is still abundance of bounties that we should be grateful for,” advised her husband. “Thank Him for what we have, thank Him by increasing our worship. Keep sharing and helping those needing help,” he continued, “As with becoming a midwife, it’s totally up to you to decide.”

Diyang just kept silent, thinking over her husband’s advice. “Although I’m your husband, I respect your choice.

I just want you to remember that if you do everything sincerely, the best reward will be from Allah. I hope that Allah will give us children,” added her husband.

“Aamiin!” said Diyang following her husband’s words.

“The night is getting late. Let’s have a rest,” said her husband closing the conversation, so she followed her husband to the bedroom.

### **Diyang Became a Midwife**

The news about Diyang’s skill as a midwife spread far and wide. She became more well known not only among the people of her village but also of the neighbouring villages. The news about her

expertise in handling childbirth spread from mouth to mouth. Her friendliness to everyone, her caring, her attentiveness, and her patience had been her main capital in helping with childbirth. Many pregnant women found her to be extremely helpful. Besides, her knowledge about medicinal herbs and her skill in concocting medicines had been a great help in her profession. After helping with the delivery, Diyang would visit the mother every morning to bathe the baby until the remains of the placenta went off. She would usually do it after she had finished with her chores. She did that because of her responsibility as a midwife helping with the childbirth. Her visits were a great help to the families of the delivering women, especially before the placenta went off, as the babies greatly needed tending. The mothers could also consult her on health issues, such as bawling baby or exhausted mother.

Normally, Diyang would make a concoction for the mother. She would not feel reluctant to teach the mother to make simple concoction for the convenience and health of the mother and the baby. That day, as she visited a woman who just gave birth, she advised the mother to make her own turmeric concoction. “Your baby’s placenta has gone off. From tomorrow on, you have to make your own concoction like the one I bring you,” said Diyang.

“What are the ingredients?” asked the mother.

“You just need turmeric, chicken egg, and honey,” said Diyang. “Drink it every morning until your baby is 40 days old. Insha Allah, it will help accelerate recuperation after childbirth as well as for your baby’s health,” continued Diyang.

“Alas, what should I do? Will I have time to make it? Besides, will it be as delicious as yours?” wondered the mother with an excuse.

Diyang just smiled hearing the mother making an excuse. Nonetheless, she understood her reasons. She often heard such excuses from the mother she had taught to make a concoction. The mothers had all sorts of excuses. Some said they had too many things to do, while some others argued their concoction was not as good as Diyang’s. Some believed that Diyang’s concoction was not just an ordinary concoction. Diyang would just smile on hearing it. As a humble person, she reacted to the compliment in an easy going manner. To her, the mothers said that simply because they were reluctant to try what she taught them to make, or they just forgot the formula. Basically, Diyang believed that all medication depended on belief and perseverance. For that reason, she had never tired of sharing the knowledge on concoction for health. She wanted the people around her to know about concoction, so that in the future, they not only could make their own concoction, but also love growing herbs and plants. To Diyang, sharing her knowledge with the mothers was a good

thing because if the mothers were capable of making concoctions for their families, they would be a good first aid and hence, they would promote healthy families.

## **Competition**

Diyang's career in midwifery was not without obstacles. Once she was informed that she was considered a rival by a midwife from a neighbouring village, as, to the midwife, Diyang had taken over her authority. Diyang responded to the rumour calmly and carefully. She did not want to be provoked by a mere rumour. To Diyang, other people's perception was their own business.

What mattered to her was to give her best service with a pure intention to help those in need. Considering herself a learner, Diyang responded to others' enmity cool-headedly. Occasionally she would be accompanied by her husband or her mother to visit a more experienced midwife to maintain a good personal relationship as well as to improve her knowledge on midwifery from those more experienced than her. That was what happened one day. She invited her mother to visit a midwife living in a neighbouring village in a boat they rowed. She brought her some fruits and vegetables as present as well as some wice and a hen.

As they arrived at the river bank where the midwife lived, they tethered their boat and got to the river bank towards her house. As they came to her door, Diyang immediately greeted.

“Assalamualaikum!”

“Wa alaikumussalam,” a female voice from behind the door replied, followed by the door being opened.

“Is grandmother home?” asked Diyang.

“Yes, but she is not quite well,” said the girl inviting them to enter the house.

“Wait a moment, I’ll let her know of your coming,” said the girl and headed towards her grandmother’s room.

“Grandma, Auntie Diyang and her mother are expecting to see you,” said the girl informing her grandmother. A few moments later, the old midwife came out from her room followed by her granddaughter.

“Eh, Mother Diyang, how are things?” asked the old woman addressing Diyang’s mother in a friendly manner.

“Alhamdulillah, I am fine,” replied Diyang’s mother. “What about you?” asked Diyang’s mother.

“Alhamdulillah, I’m fine, too. Only I am a bit unwell for the last few days,” answered the old woman.

“It’s been quite a while since our last visit. Here’s a little present from our garden for you and the family,” said Diyang’s mother



while handing over what she brought to the girl. The girl took the stuff to the kitchen.

“Thank you. That’s very kind of you,” said the old woman happily.

“We, especially Diyang, come here to apologize,” said Diyang’s mother.

“Apologize?” asked the old woman perplexed. “For what?”

“I’d like to apologize for handling the baby delivery of the women from this village,” explained Diyang.

“Oh, for that. No, it should be I who apologize. I shouldn’t be angry or offended if they prefer going to you because of my limitations,” said the old woman regretfully.

“You don’t have to apologize, grandma. Nevertheless, as a younger person, it’s appropriate for me to learn from you,” said Diyang.

The old woman smiled and felt moved. She was glad to know Diyang more closely. Obviously not only was she skillful as she often heard, but she was also tender-hearted.

“Oh ya, grandma, if you don’t mind, would you please check Diyang’s womb?” asked Diyang’s mother trying to thaw the atmosphere.

“O iya, grandma. I haven’t got a child until now,” explained Diyang.

“Let’s go to my room,” the woman invited Diyang. Diyang followed her to the room where she treated her patients. After some time, as they came out of the room, the woman said to Diyang’s mother, “Her womb is all right, only its position is a bit on a slant. I tried to fix it, though. Insyah Allah, when the time comes, your daughter will bear a child.”

“O ya, Diyang. After you have your menstruation, find a young pineapple, grate it and get its water,” said the woman to Diyang.

“Thank you very much for your help, Grandma. I hope you don’t mind if I come again to learn and to have a childbirth,” said Diyang before taking leave.

“Of course, not. I’ll be very happy to be of any help. I thank you for your visit,” said the woman.

“I’m afraid it’s time to leave,” said Diyang’s mother closing the conversation. So Diyang and her mother walked towards the boat side by side. They felt relieved by the result of their visit. For Diyang, maintaining the ties of relationship is a way to learn and maintaining a good relationship. She did not want that becoming a midwife, becoming other people’s helpers, she should, quite the contrary, trigger the enmity among fellow midwives. Diyang

believed that maintaining the ties of relationship was a good way to maintain a good relationship.

### **The Difficult Childbirth**

Once, a young woman from a distant village came to Diyang's house when her pregnancy was more than six months. The midwife in her village told her that the baby in her womb was in upside down position which would make childbirth process difficult. Diyang tried to comfort the woman and made her lie down calmly. She touched the woman's belly and she felt that the baby's head had not been in the birth canal.

She took a plain plate, recited certain prayer and blew the prayer onto the plate. Slowly, she put the plate bottom side up on the woman's belly and winded the plate on the belly of the woman. While winding the plate around the woman's belly, she said, "You must be patient. You have to pray to Allah SWT frequently, and don't let sadness overpower you, lest your baby will be affected," reminded Diyang. "Insya Allah your baby is all right, it's just about the time. It's not due yet. Tomorrow morning, wake up early, and after performing Subuh prayer, take a prostrating position, only with your hands stretched far forwards and your belly almost touching the floor," she continued. The woman listened attentively and practised what Diyang suggested.

“Yes, like that,” confirmed Diyang after seeing how the woman did it. “Do it every day, and do it while mopping the floor. Try to walk much,” continued Diyang.

The woman went home with a grateful feeling and a more relaxed countenance than when she first came. She did not forget to thank Diyang.

After several days, she returned. When Diyang felt her belly, she said, “Alhamdulillah, now your baby’s head has been in the birth canal,” said Diyang.

“Alhamdulillah,” said the woman with relief.

“You just wait for the due date,” said Diyang.

“If I know the due time is imminent, may I request you to help me with the delivery?” asked the woman.

“You’d better contact the midwife in your village,” said Diyang. “It’s not that I don’t want to help, but we have to consider their feelings,” Diyang explained the reason to the woman.

“If the midwife in your village is unavailable or they wish me to accompany them, I don’t mind,” continued Diyang. The woman nodded her head as a sign of understanding. Diyang, who by her nature was kind, willing to help, and caring, really maintained her relationship with everyone. She did not want to cause ill-feelings to others. She would rather maintain a good relationship than

cause an endless enmity. Once, one of her neighbours felt that childbirth was imminent. However, as Diyang checked her birth canal, there was no sign of the birth canal change. After one day, there was still no sign of an imminent childbirth.

Diyang tried to stimulate the birth by telling the mother to take the mopping position, half-squatting. She also made a drink of ginger and brown sugar for her, yet the delivery was still unconfirmed. Two days later, the baby was still unborn, but the mother was already very tired. The pain she felt had made her unable to sleep and lose her appetite. This condition was not favorable, as it could hamper the childbirth process. As a midwife, Diyang waited for the moment the baby was to be born, yet the stimulation did not seem to be effective. “You have to be strong, niece. You are under the test, so persevere and be patient!”

Diyang told the mother-to-be to keep calm. “Drink this mixture of egg and honey,” said Diyang handing over the glass containing the mixture of chicken egg and honey. The woman took the drink and thanked her. She looked hesitant to drink it. Diyang understood. Today was the third day since the young woman bore the pain of upset stomach, a sign of imminent delivery. The sign of fatigue was easily visible on the woman’s face. Her parents and husband were also worried and they stayed close to her. They seemed to share the feeling of pain undergone by the young woman. They cancelled all activities. The house of the mother-to-

be was not far from Diyang's house. They were close neighbours, even tied by kinship relationship. Being so close and having something important to tell her, Diyang was courageous to talk to the young woman.

“Forgive me beforehand. I'd like to tell you something,” said Diyang.

“Yes, auntie. Do tell me,” said the young woman.

“I hope you won't be offended to hear this. Besides relying on our own effort, we shouldn't forget to pray to Allah SWT. To complete these, we should also maintain a good relationship with the close people around us, like our parents as well as our husband. Therefore, I advise you to apologize to your parents and husband as well as ask for their prayer and consent. That may be a catalyst to your childbirth,” said Diyang. The young woman was startled and her face turned pale. She was reminded of her behaviour so far to her husband and parents.

“I'm not accusing you of doing things wrongly to them so you have to apologize, rather, I'm advising you to ask for their prayer and forgiveness. Ask for your husband's prayer and forgiveness.

Anyway, delivering a baby is a time when a mother struggles between life and death, so she needs support and sincere feeling from her own as well as from the people close to her,” said Diyang. The young woman sobbed. She imagined that her mother

was in the same state when she was giving birth to her. Hearing the young woman crying, her mother who was outside the room rushed into the room.

“What’s up? Do you feel more pain?” asked her mother worriedly.

“No, mom. Please forgive me for my unduly behaviour to you,” said the young woman. Her mother hugged her and caressed her head, “Of course, dear. I always forgive you. You are my flesh and blood. I wish only the best for you,” said her mother in tears as she saw her daughter crying.

“Where are my father and my husband?” asked the young woman. She was looking for her father and her husband with her eyes. She felt like gaining a renewed spirit.

“What’s up, daughter?” her father entered the room followed by her husband. They could not conceal worry from their faces.

“Father, forgive me for my behaviour which may have offended you and hurt your feeling. Please pray for me so I have ease in my delivery,” asked the young woman while taking her father’s hand.

“My dear husband, please forgive me for any inconvenience I may have caused you since we got married,” apologized the woman to her husband. “Please pray for my and your baby’s safety in this trying situation,” the young woman pleaded with her

husband to forgive her. Her father and her husband were stupefied, not knowing what to say. Her mother who restrained her tears approached her husband, “Please pray for our daughter’s ease in childbirth.”

Her father nodded his head. He took a deep breath, trying to cover his feeling, then said, “Come on, daughter. Be strong. I am waiting for my grandchild,” he said caressing her head. Her husband approached her and said, “I know you’re strong, my dear wife. You have nothing to be forgiven. I pray for your and our baby’s safety,” said he.

The two men left the room. They let Diyang do everything necessary to help with the childbirth as well as found a way to manage their feeling. A few minutes later, the young woman felt a new strength as the pain became more intense.

She felt a severely upset stomach. Diyang got ready. This was the sign that the baby would soon leave the womb. Diyang took a better position. She told the young woman to manage her breath by giving her examples how to take and release the breath. She told to strain with full strength. A few moments afterwards, the sound of baby crying broke the silence. Her mother caressed her daughter’s head and expressed her thankfulness for the birth of her grandchild. Diyang was relieved to see the baby. She cleaned the baby and handed it over to the baby’s father who immediately read *azan* and *iqomah* on the baby’s right and left ears



respectively. Then the baby was breastfed by the mother. Fatigue had left the face of the mother, replaced by happiness for the coming of the baby on her lap. The young mother was thankful for her baby's birth. She also felt a new awareness which motivated her to behave appropriately to her parents. She imagined her mother had struggled when giving birth to her.

### **Diyang's Old Age**

Diyang's activity as a midwife did not deprive her from doing her chores. To Diyang, it was incumbent upon her to manage her time for her duty as a midwife and her time as a wife. She was also punctual in taking care of her mother. She often advised her mother to reduce her activities to the floating market.

She wanted her mother to have more rest. Her mother agreed and went to the market only to have a filling activity and maintain her relationship with her acquaintances in the market.

After some time, Diyang gave birth to a child. Her family happiness increased, as well as their economy. So she requested her mother to stop marketing her handcrafts and the garden's products in the market. Diyang assisted with childbirth and sickness, especially among children. Many people felt grateful to her, many considered her to be their own mothers. Up until her old age, she kept performing her duty as a midwife. Her old age never hindered her to help people with her expertise. In her old

age, on many occasions, those who came for her help were those who came to this world through her assistance after being kept in the womb for nine months and nine days. Therefore, she was renowned later on as Datu Diyang.