

THE BRAVE DATU
Kisah Datu Pemberani

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THE BRAVE DATU

Datu Wani's Childhood

At a cloudy night, a faint sound of a mother singing lullaby broke the silence of the night, so melodious and peaceful to hear.

Swaying swaying my dear child

Swaying in the sway, o son

Sleeping sleeping my faithful child

Growing up useful like the sun

Mangosteen is round

Starfruit's corners are five

Cry not if mommy's not around

Be good like a bee in the hive

The lullaby was heard from a small hut on the hill's foot, sung by a mother to make her child asleep, with a voice hardly heard from a distance. The house was so peaceful with the faint voice as the sun set behind the hill on the west. The child was swayed in the *pukungan*, a sway made of clothes hung on a hanger, the sway commonly used by the people of Banjar. The mother's heart is so

gentle and full of love. Even after working the whole day in the field, the mother's voice was so soft that the child immediately fell asleep in the sway.

While making her child asleep, the mother kept praying, "Ya Allah! Let my son be useful to the country and make his parents proud," she prayed silently. As the child slept, she said to her husband, "*Abah* (Daddy), I hope our son will become a useful man for the country, especially we are now under Dutch colonialization. They can attack our peaceful village anytime," said the mother, worrying about their child's future.

"Yes, mom," replied her husband, "I hope we will live long enough to guide him to be a good man of the society."

"Yes, that's our prayer for now. Besides praying, we should also prepare ourselves so we can bring up our son to be a strong and pious man that he may become a wise leader and patron to the people."

Time went by as the sun regularly gave light to the earth, causing day and night to follow each other continuously. The child in the sway had now turned into a curious teenage who always wanted to know everything around him. One morning, cocks crowed marking the coming of the day along with the rise of the sun. Red colours beautifully decorated the peaceful village.

“Abah, Abah! Will you come here? I’d like to go to my friend’s house,” said the teenage who, later on, would be well known as Datu Wani.

“What do you want to do at your friend’s house?” asked his father.

“I’d like to learn *kuntau* (martial art) from Uncle Suri,” replied the boy.

“All right, son. Go, but don’t get home too late, lest you’ll miss going to the *surau* (small mosque),” replied his father. After getting permission from his father, the courageous boy went to Uncle Suri’s house, which was not quite easy to reach as he had to go on a raft through a river with a strong current. However, for the sake of the *kuntau* lesson, after picking up his friend, they did not mind taking the long and tiring journey, not only through a river but also through a quiet forest.

Datu Wani Grew Up

The wheel of time kept rolling with days and nights replacing each other and days turning into weeks, weeks into months, and months into years. The small boy, who would be known as Datu Wani or the Brave One, had now turned into a man.

“Son! Your religious knowledge and your martial art skill have been reasonably good,” said his father one afternoon giving his son advice.

“Yes, dad. I know and understand what you mean,” said the young man. “I will use my knowledge and skill to uphold the truth and defend those in need.”

“That’s how it should be. Moreover, you are our only expectation to continue our lineage,” said the father. As the night went on, so did they continue their conversation on different topics.

The father advised his son so that his knowledge and skill would be useful for others until it was a high time to go to bed. When the roosters crowed followed by the coming of the new day, the people went to their field to do their activities. It was the planting season. One day, as the young man took a stroll around the village for sightseeing, he heard a faint voice crying for help.

“Help Help!” it was a female voice from a distance.

“Come on! Give me your stuff!” said a male voice with a heavy tone.

“Please No... No!” said the female voice pitifully.

The young man immediately moved quickly to find where the voices came from. From a distance, he saw a middle aged woman

struggling to defend her possessions from a man with a large stature and a horrible face.

“Hey, what are you doing?” shouted the young man trying to help the woman.

“What do you want?” snapped the big man.

“I should be asking you, what are you doing here? I am a villager here,” replied the young man clamorously. The man looked annoyed by the young man’s presence. He tried to threaten the young man with the machete in his hand. “One more step, and you’ll be dead!” he threatened him. The young man was not in the least scared. Instead, he stepped forward to save the woman. With his *kuntau*, he easily defeated the man.

“Forgive me ... Please forgive me, young man!” pleaded the man.

“Please don’t kill me,” he pleaded pitifully.

“I won’t kill you,” said the young man, “But don’t ever repeat your bad deed!”

“I promise, I won’t repeat it,” said the man.

“Now you go as far away from this village as you can, and never return to do crime here,” said the young man.

After the man left, the young man approached the middle aged woman who was still trembling with fear for what had happened to her.

“Are you all right?” asked the young man.

“Yes, I am all right. Thank God you came to save me from robbery.”

“Now you are safe. Be careful another time,” said the young man.

After the incident, the young man had become the talk of the village. His bravery to face the robber alone had made him well known as the Brave One.

Datu Wani’s Birthplace

Far away in a beautiful valley was a peaceful and tranquil village. The people lived in harmony and helped one another. They were mostly farmers, but some of them also caught fish in the large swamps for extra income. The village was peaceful and secure because they managed their defense from the colonial attack. The youth were provided with martial arts and war strategies useful for their village defense.

At night, although the lights of resin lamps brightly illuminated the rooms with rays going through the holes of the bamboo walls, people were hardly engaged in any activities. Obviously, they were too tired working the whole day in their fields so they went

to bed early. As seasonal farmers, they depended on the rainy season, yet when it rained excessively they could not work either. They planted the crops only once a year. One day prior to harvest, the farmers gathered and talked about their condition.

“Udin, how’s your family?” Samian asked Udin, his fellow farmer.

“Alhamdulillah, just fine,” replied Udin without stopping his work, cleaning weeds in his field.

“We’ll harvest in a short time,” said another farmer.

“Yes. I hope we’ll harvest before rainy season comes,” said Samian.

“Let’s just pray for the best,” said Udin. He was busy cleaning weeds among the rice stalks which were about to change colour from green to yellow.

“Yes, the rainy season seems imminent. If it rains continuously, I’m afraid of the flood which will destroy our crops.”

“Well, what we can do is praying, don’t just say ‘if’. As a farmer, we have to do our best so that we get the maximum result. As for disaster, it’s none of our business, that’s the authority of the Almighty,” said one of the farmers who had been silent, listening to their conversation. They kept talking until it was about midday, when the *azan* of Zuhur, the midday prayer, was heard. Without

further ado, the farmers stopped their activities and immediately got ready to perform their prayer.

“Let’s stop and go home, fellows. It’s already midday. Zuhur has come, time for praying. Besides, our stomach has demanded to be filled,” Udin invited the others to go home.

“Yes. Let’s go home,” said Samian.

“Our wives must have prepared our delicious lunch,” said Udin packing his tools.

They went home while chatting along the way under the scorching sunshine.

The Small but Prosperous Village

In the past, the people of Banjar were well known for their courage against the Dutch, the colonizer.

They upheld the motto ‘*dalas hangit waja sampai kaputing haram manyarah*’ which means ‘even if the iron gets burnt to the end, surrender is unlawful’. With this courageous motto of the fighters, the Dutch had always found it difficult to overcome them. They lived as a big family and they maintained the kinship well. They preserved the spirit of mutual cooperation in their lives. If they wanted to build a public facility, they did it with mutual cooperation, like what they were doing today, building a bridge connecting their village and the neighbouring village. They

felled the bamboo trees and made a bridge with the bamboos. They worked tirelessly until they finished the bridge.

“Alhamdulillah! Gee, our bridge is ready,” said one of the villagers.

“Yes, if we do something in mutual cooperation, we can finish much early,” replied the other.

“I couldn’t agree more! Mutual cooperation makes a difficult work easy, as the saying goes, we should share our joys and sorrows,” said another. “That’s why we should unite, especially in our current situation. The Dutch can come anytime to our village,” said another while looking at the bridge that they had just completed.

Along the river bank grew shady bamboo clusters in a tidy line, making the village a beautiful sight. The small hill overlooking the village was lush with grass and shady banana trees like spread green rugs, adding to the natural beauty of its surroundings. Occasionally, when morning had just broken, one could hear *burung darah kuku*, a species of local birds, reciprocating on the branches of *balangkasua* trees, welcoming the new day. When the sun rose, its rays were refracted by the dew which remained on the grass and yam leaves. Footsteps were heard from the farmers walking briskly to their fields, while the children started playing joyfully, ignoring the sounds of canons and gunshots far away.

Despite the peacefulness and tranquility of the village, the elders of the village maintained vigilance and the youths were stationed, patrolling on the village borders.

The Family of Datu Wani

The houses in Banjar were tilted with high verandahs. In one of such houses lived Datu Wani. He was titled Datu as he grew up. Datu was an honorary title for a knowledgeable person, both in religious knowledge and martial arts, as well as the protector of the weak.

The brave youth who had used to protect the people had now been a great warrior. Despite that, he lived a simple life. However, he had won the heart of the people. Due to his greatness and his highly magical power, as well as his invulnerability, his followers called him Datu the Brave. Datu Wani had a great stature and a brown skin. When he was around his people, he used to wear traditional costumes. It made him look greater in the eyes of his people, his admirers.

He was given the title of the Brave as he knew no fear in upholding the truth for his people. He had a creese of seven curves which was believed to have a magical power. In a fight, the creese was always in his hand, always ready to fight the foreign invaders. His followers were no less brave in facing the enemy. With their skill in martial arts, they never missed a chance

to fight by the side of their adored leader. As he led them in a good strategy, the follower always had a good impression on him, which made them braver and more courageous.

Datu Wani and His Family

As Datu Wani grew older, his bravery also increased. He was admired and awed by friends and foes alike. His name had always awed everyone. To his friends, he was a defender and admired protector.

To his foes, he was a stumbling block to achieve their goals. As a normal human being, Datu Wani also passed the stages of life like other people, from childhood until it was time for him to start his own family to produce the progeny who will inherit his wisdom and knowledge. He married a woman named Galuh Idang. She was always by the side of her beloved and brave husband for the thirty years of their marital life. Besides being a caring woman, Galuh Idang was also a brave woman. Once, in a battle against the Dutch in the forest of Gunung Ilir, despite so many people falling in the battle, they managed to drive back the Dutch out of the forest. Although she was wounded in the battle, the spirit of '*waja sampai keputing*' had firmly rooted in her hearts.

Datu Wani and His Children

Datu Wani had seven sons, brave were they as their father. People called them the Seven Commanders because they had such skills

emulating their father. They had different knowledge. Their statures were roughly the same, as tall as their father, with only difference in skin colour.

They had fair, reddish skin which distinguished them from their father, Datu Wani. Their skin colour resembled their mother's, Galuh Idang. Datu Wani and his wife brought up their children without differentiating them. Their upbringing was such that when they grew up, they became as brave as their parents. He had a creese of seven curves which was believed to have a magical power. In a fight, the creese was always in his hand, always ready to fight the foreign invaders. His followers were no less brave in facing the enemy. Wearing traditional long yellow shirt with embroidered sleeves, Datu wore a high head cloth, covering his grey hair, a sign that he was no longer young. Datu stood by himself on the house verandah, occasionally staring at a far distance before him.

The Death of Datu Wani's Wife

One rainy afternoon, after living in happiness for years with his wife with seven brave sons, datu Wani was in deep sadness as his wife was lying sick.

“My dear husband, I perceive that my end is coming nearer. This is a human life journey. Separation is incumbent upon us from those we love and care for. I'm going to meet the Almighty.

Carry on with the struggle, never surrender to the enemy, and educate our children to be brave warriors,” said Galuh Idang panting in pain.

“But what about our children after you leave?” asked Datu Wani.

“Living longer shouldn’t be the aim. Rather, we should do good for the life hereafter. This world is like a boat in the ocean, we should steer our boat towards the truth. The world will be abandoned, everything will be separated, and it’s the deed which will be the company. This is not a separation, only a transition from the temporary to the eternal life,” said Galuh Idang.

“All right, my dear wife. I have to relinquish your demise and I promise to educate our children to be brave and courageous,” said Datu Wani.

That afternoon, heavy rain accompanied the weeping and crying of the children of Datu Wani as their mother departed to the other world. It did not take more than a few minutes for the people of the village to know the demise of Galuh Idang. They joined in to offer their respect to the deceased and offer their condolence to the grieved family. After the demise of his wife, Datu Wani himself brought up his children with his fatherly care and firmness.

He fulfilled his promise to his beloved wife, with whom he shared his love till the last breath of hers, to bring up their children to be

brave and courageous and emulate their parents in their good characters.

Datu Wani's Children

Twenty-five years had passed since the death of Datu Wani's wife. Time passed quickly and the seven sons of Datu Wani had now grown up into strong, brave, and courageous warriors like their father. That was unquestionably true as their father's blood ran in their veins and their mother's spirit was instilled in their heart. Their father had successfully brought them up by himself. That night, the people gathered in the large verandah of Datu Wani's banjarese house. Light from the resin lamps illuminated all dark corners of the house. It was the night of entitlement for Datu Wani's children. Datu had sat on the entitlement chair. In a charismatic voice, he said, "My brave sons! Today, I am going to bestow positions and titles of the village's dignitaries on you. Utilize your positions and titles to protect the people. Don't let your knowledge and skill ruin the earth," the charismatic voice of Datu Wani silenced the house and the people.

"Your knowledge and abilities befit your age. All right. I shall mention your positions and titles one by one. The first one, Datu Salim will have the title of Datu Patinggi. All others will have to obey him, as he is the oldest brother and has the greatest knowledge and authority. Datu Hamid as the second will be entitled Datu Pangulu. He has the power to make iron and bullets

tender. The third, Datu Majid, will be entitled Datu Panangah, who possesses disappearing skill. He can disappear and fly. Datu Aziz, the fourth, will be entitled Datu Pangerang, He has a five-curved creese which can destroy the enemy from the front. The fifth, Datu Asad will be entitled Datu Panganang. He has inherited the knowledge on war strategy. The sixth, Datu Amar, will be entitled Datu Busu. He has the knowledge of silencing the enemy's spokesperson. And the seventh, Datu Samra, is entitled Datu Mangantu. I will hand over to him the seven-curved creese and will be the key ruler in this area. Remember, my children, these are my decree. Unite, and help one another to fight for the truth." They stood adjacently and looked like princes with similar look, yet they were different. These were the Datu Wani's company in the war.

When the inauguration was over and the night was getting late, the people took leave one by one. The light emanating from the resin lamps were fading as the surroundings got quieter.

The Dutch Attacked the Village

It was a gripping situation for the village of Datu Wani as the people heard that the Dutch was advancing to attack and conquer the neighbouring villages one by one, especially those villages which were rich in natural resources so that the Dutch could exploit them for their own benefits. When the sun rose from the east, Datu Wani strolled on his house verandah and he walked

hither and thither restlessly. Obviously he had something worrying him in his mind. He made up his mind. He gathered the people who were starting to work on their fields. Actually he was rather hesitant to gather the people because it was the planting season, but as it was such an emergency, he had no other choice. The reason was clear. Datu Wani started to feel restless when he heard news from the neighbouring villages that the Dutch troops were marching towards their villages. What worried him was how to keep his people in peace without any disturbance from any parties. Datu Wani kept thinking about this and gathered his sons.

“Majid, beat the *kentongan* (wooden tube to alarm the people of something important) five times!” ordered Datu Wani.

“As you order, Father,” replied Majid adroitly. Datu Wani smiled at his son’s adroit reply. ‘You are really my brave son, Majid,’ murmured Datu Wani. Majid had hardly finished beating the *kentongan* when the people came in a hurry towards him, for they understood that there was some emergency case requiring their immediate presence. They stopped whatever activities they were in, planting rice on the ricefield or catching fish in the river. The two activities were the people’s main earnings, planting crops and catching fish with simple tools like *lunta* (net) and *unjun* (fishing hook).

The Tranquility of the Village was Disturbed

In the past, before the loud speaker was invented, *kentongan* was used to gather people. *Kentongan* was made from bamboo to call or gather people.

When the people heard the *kentongan* beaten repeatedly, they would stop all activities, and would rush to the where the *kentongan* was beaten. It was the sign of something urgent requiring everyone's attention.

“What's up? *Kentongan* at this bright daylight?” asked one of the people.

“I have no idea. It's so unusual,” replied the other.

“Let's just see what's happening,” suggested the other.

The people gathered from all directions. They hurried with a worried look to the village square. They saw something unusual on their leader's face. He was trembling with anger and worry. Accompanied by his seven sons, Datu wani started giving directions to his people.

The Struggle of the Women

“My brave people, today I have the *kentongan* beaten to call you. The Dutch has attacked the village on the east. So we will have to

be ready to fight on the border. All men are required to be armed to fight,” said the leader closing his speech with a prayer.

“Is the situation that serious, Datu?” asked a young man.

“Yes. I even heard that the people in other villages have been mobilized, too,” replied Datu Wani. “We’d better be ready because the Dutch is usually very cunning, and they often send their spies to the villages.”

“We should gather again tomorrow evening to discuss our strategy,” continued Datu Wani. “Now I dismiss this meeting and please get back to work.”

Just before they dispersed, a female voice was heard, “What about us women? May we fight along with the men?” asked the brave woman. Hearing the question, Datu Wani was silent for a moment. It was true that none could stop the women to take part in the fight, but he remembered his wife who was with him in the fight against the foreign invader and got wounded which led her to end her life. He did not wish other women to have the same fate as his wife’s. ‘I don’t want to see children losing their mothers’ love in their tender age,’ thought he. He thought hard to find a way how the women could participate in the fight until an idea came up in his mind.

“The women may take part in the fight, but you don’t have to directly involve yourselves in the open battle. You can set up the common kitchen to help the men,” said he.

“What do you think, ladies? Do you agree?”

“We do! We do!” shouted the women. With no less enthusiasm than the men’s, the women took part cooperatively, setting up a common kitchen to prepare food for the fighting warriors who courageously defended their beloved homeland from the foreign invader.

The Struggle of Datu Wani

The brave Datu Wani walked, accompanied by his young and brave sons as well as his people armed with *mandau* (traditional long one-bladed sword). The creese was inserted on Datu’s hip and on his hand was a sharpe-edged bamboo.

“My sons,” said Datu Wani opening the conversation.

“Yes, Father?” replied his sons while they kept walking beside their father who looked older but still looked robust and authoritative.

“If your father is no more here in this world, carry on with the struggle.”

“Yes, Father. We surely will continue the struggle to the last drop of our blood,” said his sons courageously. “Whatever it takes, we will carry on with your struggle.”

“That’s good,” said Datu Wani. “This land shouldn’t be occupied by the foreign invader who only exploits us without giving any benefit to us,” added Datu Wani.

The people united to defend their beloved homeland led by the brave Datu Wani who kept instilling the spirit of struggle and sacrifice in their hearts.

As the day was nearing its end, the crimson sky got darker, a sign of the coming of night. Cheerful shouts were heard accompanying their enthusiastic steps and spirit of winning against The Dutch, the invader.

The Death of Datu Wani

“Viva Datu Wani, the Brave!” shouted the people revitalized the spirit of the brave.

Days turn into months and months into years, and men’s age increases in number. Along with the increase of men’s age, the process of change takes place. When a man is oblivious of the effect of time on himself, he hardly realizes that he is getting old. But those who are aware will run their lives wisely, preparing the provisions they are going to bring to the hereafter. As he was

getting older, Datu Wani could see that robustness started to leave him. However, despite his occasionally sick condition, his spirit of struggle had always been with him.

And one day, as had been destined by the Almighty, Datu Wani passed away peacefully on his bed in his old age, not because he got shot by the enemy. Prior to his death, Datu Wani was still able to tell his sons his will.

”My beloved sons! Be brave in protecting people and establishing justice. Don’t misuse your capability for wrongdoings and don’t quarrel among yourselves. Stand in unity to fight the foreign invaders and drive them away from our beloved homeland. We haven’t been able to drive them away now, yet I have a firm belief that you, my sons, are able to do it. As long as colonialism is still practised on the face of the earth, we will never live peacefully. Keep struggling, my sons!”

On the bank of the long river estuary, stood small high-tilted houses with pillars from Borneo ironwood and roofs from sago palm leaves. The walls were made of bamboo wickerwork and the floor was from palm or coconut trees. The river ran along among the streams connecting one village to the others.

The sounds of spattering water, the sounds of the melodious and melancholic intermingling winds, the dry bamboo leaves blown by the wind, and the twittering of black *tinjau* birds were the daily

sights and sounds of the villages. The big Banjar house, the heritage of Datu Wani had now been occupied by the seven brothers of Datu Wani's sons and their families. The Banjar house was made from Borneo ironwood with high platform rooms, each of which was occupied by one family. Datu Patinggi as the oldest of the seven brothers assumed the leadership of the village. Datu Patinggi was the title of the highest leader, while his youngest brother's title was Datu Mangantu. It was Datu Patinggi who inherited the position as the leader. He also inherited the talisman from his father.

The Quarrel of Datu Wani's Children

Datu Patinggi was the leader of the seven brothers as well as the leader of the village. For some time, there had been a dissension between Datu Patinggi as the highest leader and his youngest brother, Datu Mangantu, concerning the fight against the Dutch. The youngest brother was unwilling to take part in the fight against the Dutch. The other brothers tried to interfere in the quarrel between the two.

“Why are you two quarrelling? Have you forgotten our father's last message that we should always stand in unity in joys and sorrows? We shouldn't quarrel. If we brother are quarrelling, the enemy will have an upper hand over us easily.

If the leaders are quarrelling, how will they lead the people?" Datu Panangah tried to calm down Datu Patinggi until the latter was silent in embarrassment. Datu Mangantu was the bravest of all the brothers. Bullets could not wound him. In one quiet afternoon, he felt remorseful having quarrelled with his older brothers, while what they said was true that they should have fought against the Dutch, the invader. He realized his mistake and shed his tears. When, in the following morning, everyone went sufficiently armed with weapons and sharpened bamboo to fight the Dutch who attacked their village, Datu Mangantu joined in. He had been determined to fight along with his older brothers. Whatever it took, the Dutch had to be driven away from the land of Kalimantan. Datu Mangantu had a strange feeling as if he had been about to experience something he had never experienced before. In a battle, when death is imminent, nothing should be feared. He had a firm determination to fight for the homeland, yet there was something bothering in his heart.

Early morning, everyone was ready with their weapons. A battle was inevitable, and when it broke, it was really a tight fight. However, the local people could not defend their village for long. Due to their simple weapons, they were defeated. Many of the local fighters fell as martyrs. Datu Patinggi invited Datu Pabungsu or Datu Mangantu to retreat, but the latter refused. Datu Mangantu was eventually captured by the Dutch.

Datu Mangantu left a message to his followers that if he should die in the battlefield, he should be buried at the pavilion made from rattan illustrated with dragon head and the rope made from banyan trees. As the Dutch was very cunning, Datu Mangantu was captured. He felt that his death was imminent. The Dutch soldiers took aim at Datu Mangantu. When three gunshots were heard, everyone knew that Datu Mangantu had met his end as a martyr and a hero. Cryings and weepings could not be restrained throughout the village. The corpse of Datu Mangantu was buried as he had wished. The Dutch soldiers also witnessed his burial. When he was buried, everyone was surprised to hear an unusual sound like humming from his grave. Even the Dutch soldiers were silenced and made pensive by the strange thing. In the language of Banjar, 'to be pensive' is *mandam*. That was how *Desa Mandampu* came into being. The place where Datu Mangantu was buried was named Desa Mandampu. The stories about the bravery of Datu Wani and his sons are still narrated orally, from mouth to mouth, to this day.

The stories have become a legend as well as a history of fighters to defend their land from the foreign invaders. The stories took place in a village in Kalimantan. To this day, in the village where Datu Wani used to live, the people live in prosperity. They work as farmers and rubber tappers. Besides, they also derive palm sugar materials from the palm trees. That is why, the village is also famous for its palm sugar.