

CUSTOMS (*ADAB*) OF GOVERNANCE AS DEPICTED IN TRADITIONAL MALAY LITERATURE

Rahimah Hamdan* and Arba'ie Sujud**

Abstract: This paper is aimed at describing the customs (*adab*) pertaining to the Malay rulers as enshrined in the book (*kitab*), *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)*, and to compare it with the behaviour of the first ruler of Singapore in the Malay poem (*syair*), *Syair Tenku Perabu*. The political instability brought about by the death of Sultan Mahmud Syah in 1812 was exploited by the British to gain influence in southern Malaya, especially to control trade in Singapore. The cunning of the British in interfering with the crisis that erupted over the coronation of the sultan paid off when Sultan Husain Muadzam Syah was installed as the first ruler of Singapore. From the time of the Malay Sultanate of Aceh in the early 17th century, it had been customary for the book (*kitab*), *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)* to be used as a reference by the Malay rulers during their reign. Accordingly, Sultan Husain Muadzam Syah was no exception in using this book (*kitab*) as the key to his government policies. However, the behaviour of this leader, as illustrated in *Syair Tenku Perabu*, was inconsistent with *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)*. By analysing the texts in *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)* and *Syair Tenku Perabu*, this study highlights the customs (*adab*) that should have been practised by the ruler in his government and further clarifies the reasons for the fall of the Malay government in Singapore for not complying with the concepts of those customs (*adab*). This study makes an important contribution, especially in promoting the book (*kitab*), *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)* as a literature on constitutionalism that guided the Malay rulers for generations. In conclusion, a leader needs to understand his responsibilities as the 'Caliph of Allah' on this earth so that the country that is ruled by him will be blessed and prosperous.

Keywords: Customs (*adab*), *syair* (poem), traditional Malay, *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)*, Sultan Husain Muadzam Syah.

INTRODUCTION

The Malay community experienced a dynamic evolution in their religious worship and beliefs starting with animism, Hinduism-Buddhism, and finally, Islam. Although the Malay community embraced Islam, as evidenced by the golden age and development of Islam in the archipelago in the 15th century, the remnants of Hindu-Buddhist beliefs are strongly etched in the heart of the community. The concept of 'The Divine King' (*Devaraja*) is still prevalent in traditional Malay society, thereby causing the ruler to be crowned as the supreme authority in the communal hierarchy (Geldern, 1942:22). This phenomenon has led to the emergence of the ruler as the head with absolute power over all his subjects. The sanctity of the ruler was reinforced by various myths about their mystical descent and sovereignty, which

* Corresponding author, Department of Malay Language, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia. Email: rahimahh@upm.edu.my

** Department of Malay Language, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia

are deeply ingrained in Hindu-Buddhist beliefs handed down from generation to generation. The arrival of Islam in the early 11th century further raised the status quo of the Malay rulers to a much higher level. They continued to be regarded as descendants of the great world leaders of the East and West whose births had been highlighted through various myths. Their responsibilities as the ‘Caliph of Allah’ or ‘God’s shadow in the world’ further validated the legitimacy of the ruler as the ‘sovereign king’ (Bagley, 1964: 45).

Thus, Islam as a way of life, has placed conditions for the privileged power of rulers as leaders who have been entrusted with the responsibility of governing the world with wisdom. Kings or rulers must be aware of the great responsibility that has been placed on their shoulders to fulfil the will of Allah and, at the same time, to strive to be the best model for their subjects (perfect man or esteemed man) (Braginsky, 1993: 1998; Muhd. Norizam Jamian and Shaiful Bahri Md. Radzi, 2016:90). This means the ruler, as the ‘Caliph of Allah in the world’ should regard the customs (*adab*) as a key element in carrying out his responsibilities. The slogan, ‘A just ruler is a ruler who is worshiped, a despotic ruler is a ruler who is rejected’, is a phrase that is mentioned in *Sulalatus Salatin (Sejarah Melayu)* as written proof of an agreement (*waadat*) between the ruler and his subjects. The concept of justice is not limited to the question of punishment alone, but also the processing of all other matters in relation to the people and the government in more creative ways in literary works. For example, literary works concerning the administration of the country, such as *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)*, *Bustanus Salatin*, *Thamarat al-Muhimmah* and so on, were written to provide guidance to rulers and state officials in the Malay world with regard to the rules of government.

Accordingly, the literary work on the administration of the country, such as *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)* was often used as a guide by the Malay rulers in governing the country since the 17th century. This attracted the interest of many colonial Dutch and English scholars in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, such as G.H. Werndly, Roorda van Eysinga, de Hollander, Ph. S. van Ronkel, R. O. Winstedt and several others, to study and understand the contents of this book (*kitab*) on state administration. On the whole, these colonial scholars focused more on the aspects of philology and the determination of the status of the author of *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)*. However, from the 1950s until now, the research has been intensified by several scholars within and outside the country, such as Marrison (1955), Johns (1961), Khalid M. Hussain (1966), Brakel (1970), Grinter (1979), Fatimah Embong (1982), Mohd. Aris Othman (1983), Siti Hawa Hj. Salleh (1992 and 2010), Braginsky (1993; 2000), Barnard (1994), Asma Ahmat (1994), Jelani Harun (1996; 1999; 2001; 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006 and 2009), Cheah Boon Kheng (2006), Khalif Muammar A. Harris (2011) and Shah Rul Anuar and Nik Kamal (2014), on various aspects of *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)*. It was discovered that none of the above studies made a comparison of constitutional literature, especially the *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of King)*, with other forms or

genres in traditional Malay literature. What's more, the issue of 'royal customs (adab)', which are the pillars of government as enshrined in the *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)*, has never been highlighted by scholars in detail. Most of the studies have only been a comparison between the texts in the constitutional genre, the Arab-Persian contributions to this genre in the Malay world, and studies concerning the content and determination of the identity of the real author of the works. In the event that the study was orientated towards the customs (*adab*) of government, the basis of the research was focused more on the framework of the customs (*adab*) from the perspective of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas (2001) and not *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)*, for example, previous studies by Muhd. Norizam Jamian and Shaiful Bahri Md. Radzi (2013), Norasma Ab. Aziz and Muhd. Norizam Jamian (2016), as well as Muhd Norizam Jamian and Shaiful Bahri Md. Radzi (2016).

Moving on from this point, this study focused on aspects of government 'customs (*adab*)' with two main objectives, i.e. to describe the customs (*adab*) pertaining to the Malay rulers as enshrined in the book (*kitab*), *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)*, and to compare them with the behaviour of the first ruler of Singapore, as depicted in the poem, *Syair Tenku Perabu*. This poem was chosen as a comparison because the ruler depicted in this poem also used the *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)* as a guide during his reign. However, the cities under his administration still fell into the hands of the British until the power of the Malays was wiped out in Singapore in the early 19th century. Indirectly, this study unravelled the personality of the last ruler of Singapore through the 'dark' poem that had been hidden for so long in Malay historiography.

CUSTOMS (ADAB) OF GOVERNMENT AND THE BOOK (KITAB) TAJUS SALATIN (THE CROWN OF KINGS)

The key to guaranteeing human well-being and happiness in life is the preservation of customs (*adab*). Nevertheless, customs (*adab*) must be tempered with education so that life will flourish within an individual (Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, 2001:54). Education that can add value to customs (*adab*) in an individual comes through the concepts of Islamic learning (*ta'dib*), which contain elements of knowledge (*'ilm*), instruction (*ta'lim*) and guidance (*tarbiyah*) (Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, 1980:34). As such, a 'civilized human being' is one who knows his God, knows and loves his Messenger, and considers the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. as *uswah hasanah*, respects the scholars as the descendants of the Prophet, and has a high regard for knowledge. By complying with these rules, a person will be able to successfully perform his duties as the '*Caliph of Allah*' (Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas 2001: 118-120). The importance of customs (*adab*) in the life of a person cannot be denied because a 'customs' (*adab*) is "[...] the spectacle (*mashhad*) of justice as it is reflected by wisdom" (Syed Muhammad Naquib

al-Attas, 1980:23). Accordingly, in keeping with the literary concept in Islam as ‘*al-adabi*’, i.e. literature that comes from a delicate soul that is aimed at educating and nurturing the conscience of the people with pure values (Shafie, 1996: 118-151), hence ‘literature’ plays a very big role in religion and society. Hence, this has given rise to the literary genre of customs (*adab*) or constitutionality, especially in traditional Malay literature.

Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings) was among the works written by Bukhari al-Jauhari in 1603 in response to several incidents that took place in the court of Aceh during the reign of Sultan Alauddin Riayat Syah (1586 to 1604). The problems with regard to the power struggle in the palace, the growing plural society as a result of trade expansion, as well as the love of the Acehnese people for mysticism made it necessary to have a guide to address the socio-political instability (Shah Rul Anuar Nordin, 2014:5). Since then, the *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)* has continued to be a guide for rulers and officials throughout the Malay world in running the government of the country in a civilized manner. Generally, the contents of the book (*kitab*), *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)*, can be divided into three parts, namely:

1. Human history, the world and its creation as well as the concept of monotheism.
2. Procedures for running the government, the concept of justice and constitutional customs (*adab*).
3. Education in various sciences.

This study will only be focusing on the second part, i.e. ‘procedures for running the government, the concept of justice and constitutional customs (*adab*)’, covering ten (10) articles out of a total of twenty-four (24) in *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)* concerning the customs (*adab*) that should be observed by a ruler, namely:

S. No.	Customs (<i>adab</i>) category	Article in <i>Tajus Salatin</i> (<i>The Crown of Kings</i>)											
		4	5	6	7	9	10	14	17	20	21		
1.	Custom of the ruler being filled with knowledge	√	√		√								
2.	Custom of the ruler in interactions				√						√		
3.	Custom of the ruler being fair			√		√					√		
4.	Customs concerning ministers and royal advisers								√				
5.	Custom of the ruler regarding the rights of his children									√			
6.	Custom of the ruler pertaining to the citizens (Muslims and non-Muslims)										√	√	√

Based on the above table, it is no wonder that the constitutional literature of *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings) (Mahkota Raja-Raja)* is so famous throughout the Malay world. Starting in Aceh, this book (*kitab*) has spread to every corner of the island of Sumatra, Malaya, the Riau Islands and Java. *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)* was also adopted by the rulers of Johor-Riau after the glorious era of Aceh as the centre of Islamic knowledge in the Malay world. Therefore, the analysis below will compare the customs (*adab*) of government in the *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)* with the behaviour of Sultan Husain Muadzam Syah, the sultan of Singapore, as depicted in *Syair Tenku Perabu*.

COMPARISON OF THE CUSTOMS (ADAB) OF GOVERNMENT BETWEEN *TAJUS SALATIN (THE CROWN OF KINGS)* AND *SYAIR TENKU PERABU*

Syair Tenku Perabu di Negeri Singapura or *Syair Tenku Perabu* is among the Malay poems (*syair*) that were recopied in 1250 AH or 1835 AD by a Malay author, whose identity is unknown. This poem clearly touches on the crisis being faced by the Malay community in Singapore at that time in adjusting to the British colonial administration. The replacement of the power of the palace by the British system of governance plunged the Malay community into a system of values and governance that was very different from their traditional way of life, and the ethics and conventions that had been upheld by them all along. For example, the Malay rulers no longer held absolute power, but instead were controlled by ‘European rajas’ comprised of the British administrators. The struggle of the Malay community in the face of the various transformations that took place as a consequence of this colonialization gave birth to social protests in the form of poems, such as the *Syair Tenku Perabu* in the 1830s by an author of unknown identity.

According to Muhammad Hj. Salleh (1994:7), this poetic manuscript, consisting of 162 couplets, was discovered by him in the National Library of France in Paris (Mal. Pol. 91). Since it boldly criticises and opposes the Malay rulers and their families, this poem was handwritten and not printed. This poem was said to have been distributed secretly, and its target audience was the British people at that time (Muhammad Hj. Salleh, 1994:7). It is possible that the owner and keeper of this poetic work was also a British, based on the fact that the translated version in English was provided together with this work when it was discovered (Muhammad Hj. Salleh, 1994:7). This poem describes an issue that went against royal etiquette and brought shame to the entire palace and the people of Singapore. The exposure of the reality in the life of the Singapore ruler (Sultan Husain Muadzam Syah), who failed as a leader in the eyes of his subjects, resulted in this work being used by the author as a channel of criticism. It states that the king allowed himself to be fooled by the queen (Tenku Perabu) and her secret lover, Abdul Kadir, to satisfy their lustful desires. The author boldly and frankly criticises several palace individuals,

including the ruler of Singapore himself. This was a display of extraordinary courage by a Malay author against his ruler. The factor that gave rise to this situation was the unrest among the Malays caused by the geo-political distribution of boundaries in the Anglo-Dutch Treaty in 1824, which was very significant in the history of the Malay community. With this agreement, the Malay territory was split into two, namely the Malay Peninsula (British), and the islands to the south of Singapore (Dutch) (Moorhead, 1963: 124-125). However, on the side of the indigenous community, especially among the Malay aristocrats, a power struggle emerged that continued, especially in the south of the Malay Peninsula, after the Johor-Riau Sultanate broke into two in the 19th century. The success or failure of the parties involved in this conflict was determined by their prudence in seeking the influence of the palace and the two European powers in overcoming their rivals. The politics of Stamford Raffles coupled with the weakness of Sultan Husain Muadzam Syah caused Singapore, which was earlier a part of Johor, to separate and to become a part of the Straits Settlements

Syair Tenku Perabu was written in response to this disappointment. It was as though the ruler, who had all along been a ‘symbol of Malay sovereignty’, as opined by Milner (1982:104-109; 1994:16-24) that “[...] he was the primary object of loyalty, **he was central to every aspect of Malay life**”, had been buried in this poem. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1980:21) reinforced this situation with his view that human beings always underestimate the importance of upholding customs (*adab*) in life, to the extent that they “[...] make alterations and confuse the place of things such that injustice occurs’. For that reason, the author of *Syair Tenku Perabu* remained unknown and his work was never discussed in his homeland until it was introduced by Muhammad Hj. in 1994. This study attempts to prove that Sultan Husain Muadzam Syah, as the first ruler of Singapore, was biased in his rule or strayed far from the customs (*adab*) as contained in the *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)* compared with the behaviour of the ruler in *Syair Tenku Perabu* as follows:

1. Custom of the Ruler being Filled with Knowledge

The words of Allah S.W.T. in surah *al-Mujadalah* (verse 11), which means, “Allah raises the positions of those who believe and those who have been given knowledge”, proves the importance of knowledge in life, more so for a ruler. As a role model to his subjects, a ruler should have abilities and skills in certain aspects to qualify himself as a credible leader. Therefore, knowledge is a vital asset for ensuring the quality of leadership. Through knowledge, a ruler can become aware of the facts of his life, especially in this temporary world, as stated in Article 4 of *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)*. This means that a civilized ruler must ensure that he is knowledgeable in order to lead his people and his city in the best way possible. As the ‘Caliph of Allah swt in the world’, a ruler must be aware of the facts of his

life to maintain a balance between the needs of this world and the hereafter. *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)* emphasizes the custom that a ruler must be filled with knowledge in order to ensure the success of his administration. In reviewing *Syair Tenku Perabu*, it was found that the ruler, Sultan Husain Muadzam Syah, was far from practising this main custom. He is described as a man who was very materialistic and worldly. Due to his lack of knowledge, he looked more to pleasure and prestige than to his responsibilities as a leader. As a result, he was willing to sacrifice his dignity by accepting a monthly remuneration of \$1300 from the British. Another consequence of his shallow knowledge was that he accumulated a lot of debts until finally Singapore was sold into the hands of Stamford Raffles. *Syair Tenku Perabu* (1994:56) mentions this situation as follows:

In memories that never end
There was give and take between the rulers
**a monthly wage of thirteen hundred,
to be completely ruined in a breath.**

The concept of a treaty indirectly led to a hegemony of power between the ruler and the people. The phenomenon legitimised the power of the leader over the people and placed the dignity of the leader in the hands of the people. Both parties had to mutually support each other in order to forge a harmonious relationship between the two. Article 5 in *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)* describes how a king can be highly exalted if his reign is carried out according to the laws of Allah and modelled on the rule of the Prophet. However, if the reverse happens, the people do not have to be loyal to the ruler and are released from the law of Allah swt. In *Syair Tenku Perabu*, Sultan Husain is portrayed as a ruler who failed to observe the custom during his reign because he possessed no knowledge. The proof was that he was described as being very weak in managing his household as the head of the family until his queen blatantly made a fool of him by ‘playing a double game’. As a consequence, the people were disappointed because the ruler, whom they had looked up to, was incapable of controlling the scandal under his own roof. As such, the people rose in revolt because of the loss of the concept of a ‘sovereign ruler’, which had been the symbol of ‘Malay supremacy’ all along through the phrase, ‘**stammering and blind, careless and deaf**’, that was used to refer to Sultan Husain Syah, as in the following excerpt (*Syair Tenku Perabu*, 1994:56):

The sultan was fair in his affairs as a ruler
Stammering and blind, careless and deaf
No matter how much was brought to his attention
He was not concerned in any way

A ruler who preserves the customs (*adab*) of a leader by his love for knowledge will not allow his subjects to be oppressed by unjust ‘officials’, as stated in Article 7 of *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)*. The ‘officials’ are those individuals who

hold power in government institutions, especially in influencing and advising the ruler. A review of *Syair Tenku Perabu* revealed that the ruler listened to the words of his senior ‘official’, Abdul Kadir (Tambi), who was the lover of the queen herself, rather than to other individuals. The queen, Tenku Perabu, exploited the weakness of the sultan to dominate the people until they felt that they were being treated unjustly. Thus, the respect and allegiance to the institution of the palace were ‘lost’, as expressed in the following couplets of the poem (*Syair Tenku Perabu*, 1994: 58, 67-68):

Tenku Perabu and Tambi exchanged
 Diamond rings, fabrics and chains
 Many in the palace household spied on them
 Whoever eavesdropped **was severely beaten**
 Many murmured in confusion
 At the sort of rulers who behaved irresponsibly
 Coming ashore to make their escape
A few are left while many have run off

2. Custom of the Ruler in Interactions

A great ruler is one who is always cautious in his interactions. This means a leader must approach scientists and scholars so that he will always be armed with knowledge and guidance in carrying out his responsibilities as a head of state. Articles 7 and 17 discuss this custom by emphasizing the importance of ‘social science’ to ensure harmony in a country. In reviewing *Syair Tenku Perabu*, it was found that the author did not in any way indicate that Sultan Husain Syah mingled with religious persons or scholars, but instead portrayed the ruler of Singapore as being constantly preoccupied with his wealth. Undoubtedly, if the sultan had been mingling with religious persons and scholars, he would not have allowed the adulterous relationship between his queen and his right-hand man (Abdul Kadir/Keling/Tambi) to go on unabated to the extent that the illegitimate child born to them was murdered (‘**on being ordered to get rid of the wretched child**’), as in the following excerpt (*Syair Tenku Perabu*, 1994:57):

Thereupon, through the **so-called** Keling
Tenku Perabu was found to be four months pregnant
 A foreign midwife was immediately summoned
 On entering the room, the door was bolted.
On being ordered to get rid of the wretched child
It was buried beneath a cempaka tree

Tambi objected to the abortion
 Tenku Perabu was punched in the face

3. Custom of a Ruler Being Fair

Justice is much sought after in a leader. Articles 6, 9 and 17 in *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)* clearly states the importance of justice in a country's system of government. For example, Article 6 (*Tajus Salatin, The Crown of Kings*, 1992:70) mentions the consequences to a country if the 'sovereignty of the ruler' is lost due to injustice against the people. Meanwhile, Article 9 (*Tajus Salatin, The Crown of Kings*, 1992:108) speaks about the sufferings that will be experienced by the people if the ruler is unjust in carrying out sentences. This is reinforced by Article 17, which advises that a ruler should deal fairly with his people without any intention of persecuting them. A review of *Syair Tenku Perabu* revealed how Sultan Husain Syah acted blindly by believing the lies of his young wife, Tenku Perabu, in banishing Tengku Jalil (his own son). Without being given an opportunity to defend himself, Tengku Jalil was forced to accept the punishment. Tengku Jalil's disappointment, sadness and anger towards his father, Sultan Husain Syah, are expressed below (*Syair Tengku Perabu*, 1994:76):

On the way home from the city
 Feeling extremely sorrowful
 Recalling his father's dismal behaviour
 Tired and weary all over.

4. Customs (*adab*) Concerning Ministers and Royal Advisers

Article 10 in *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)* touches on the customs (*adab*) pertaining to the ministers and royal advisers. This is because a prosperous country is one that has a line-up of united and loyal ministers in the service of the reigning monarch. The greatness of a country depends very much on the wisdom and credibility of its ministers, who form the backbone of the government. The *Sulalatus Salatin (Sejarah Melayu)* noted how several cities fell because the customs (*adab*) pertaining to the relationship between the ministers and the ruler were lost. For example, there was the tale of an official of Singapore, Sang Rajuna Tapa, who betrayed his country to the enemy (Majapahit) when he opened the door to the Fort of Singapore, thereby leading to the fall of Singapore into the hands of the Majapahits. In fact, the fall of Malacca into the hands of the Portuguese was also because there was a lack of understanding between the officials in Malacca, corruption was rampant and the officials were selected at the whims and fancies of the ruler rather than for their credibility and wisdom. That was why Article 10 outlined the customs (*adab*) pertaining to ministers and royal advisers who are the backbone of the success of a ruler in governing his city (*Tajus Salatin, The Crown*

of Kings: 110). *Syair Tenku Perabu* touched on this subject when the opinions of very wise ministers (local natives) were ignored, and instead they were removed from service and replaced by ‘foreigners’ (Indians and Bengalis). For instance, when the scandal concerning the queen, Tenku Perabu, and Abdul Kadir (Tambi), became the ‘talk’ in palace circles, they acted recklessly without discussing the matter with the ruler (Sultan Husain Muadzam Syah). All the officials were driven out from the palace and were stripped of their posts, and instead they were replaced by ‘Bengalis’ who supposedly were more honest and loyal. What was even sadder still was that the customs (*adab*) pertaining to the ministers and royal advisers were lost when this group reportedly cursed their ruler and his family, as described in the excerpt below (*Syair Tenku Perabu*, 1994:60):

Tenku Perabu and Tambi did not care
 They were asked to recruit Bengali guards
All the Malays were expelled
 Tenku Yahya, Encik Abu were driven out as well
 They were all quiet and depressed
While cursing, swearing, spitting
 Sitting here and there, looking skywards
 Gone were all shame and fortune.

Clearly, no feelings of respect, loyalty, sincerity and obedience remained in the hearts of the officials toward the ruler and his family due to the disgusting moral behaviour that was taking place. The author, overcome by anger, used the couplet, “**While cursing, swearing, spitting**” to directly express his hatred, thereby obliterating the concept of a ‘sovereign ruler’ who should be revered in the hearts of the officials of the country.

5. Customs (*adab*) of the Ruler Regarding the Rights of his Children

The position of head of the family, which is entrusted to the men, is a responsibility that is held in high esteem in Islam. What’s more, if the head of the family also happens to be the head of a government, then the trust that must be shouldered is multiplied if that ruler is to remain great in the eyes of his subjects. Article 14 in *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)* includes guidelines on how to raise children so that the customs (*adab*) pertaining to a ruler as the head of a family toward his children is maintained (*Tajus Salatin, The Crown of Kings* 1992:147). Nevertheless, *Syair Tenku Perabu* describes how the main character, specifically the ruler (Sultan Husain Muadzam Syah), betrayed his children in various ways. Tengku Jalil was falsely accused without any proper defence until he was exiled for a time from Singapore. Obviously, the offspring entrusted to the ruler by Allah swt to be cared for and educated properly according to religious principles was betrayed at will.

For that reason, the author portrayed Tengku Jalil as having lost all respect for his stepmother (Tenku Perabu), to the extent that he was “**Peeking and spying, waiting to hammer**” the queen, as mentioned below (*Syair Tenku Perabu, 1994: 58*):

Tengku Jalil felt ashamed on hearing this
His heart was filled with extreme fury

Peeking and spying, waiting to hammer

It was so deep that even Tenku Perabu knew.

The obvious treachery in this poem was expressed more emotionally by the author when the rights of the only daughter of the queen were ignored. *Syair Tenku Perabu* showed the customs (*adab*) of the ruler pertaining to the rights of his children in a household. Clearly, the ruler no longer respected the rights of his daughter in the episode concerning the selection of a suitable candidate to be her husband, but instead he approved of the action of the queen, who was obviously using the child to satisfy her passionate desires. This was reflected in the way Tun Andak was made the victim of her mother’s lust and her father’s (Sultan Husain Syah) foolishness when she was wedded to Abdul Kadir (Tambi). This marriage directly ‘legitimised’ Abdul Kadir’s (Tambi) continued stay in the palace at large. The author’s resentment is expressed in the couplet, “**My daughter is a flea, I am a louse**” and “**squeezing and pulling to the right and left**”, which seemed to reflect that a ‘parasite’ had been identified in this royal family by its every action, as follows (*Syair Tenku Perabu 1994: 72*):

I am the wife of the ruler of the country

This is known to everyone

Well, I now give Andak

To Tambi as his wife

When I have become an in-law

I can also lodge there

My daughter is a flea, I am a louse

Nobody there will know

Tambi is also in favour of this act

His face is glowing with joy

Squeezing and pulling to the right and left

Tenku Perabu happily remains silent

6. Customs (*adab*) Pertaining to the Ruler Towards his Subjects (Muslims and Non-Muslims)

The ruler must uphold the customs (*adab*) with regard to his subjects, which encompass his behaviour and actions. This is because all his actions will certainly

set an example and will be followed by the people under his rule. *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)* describes this in Article 17, where it states that a ruler must be fair in his judgments, must be willing to listen to any complaints and must be gentle in his speech with the people. Meanwhile, Article 20 mentions the importance of the relationship between the Muslim subjects and their ruler. A ruler should always protect and not ignore the rights of his subjects regardless of their religious or ethnic background. However, these clauses are refuted in *Syair Tenku Perabu*. The author boldly ‘reviled’ these using coarse language with words like ‘**ass**’ and ‘**that so-called thing**’ in reference to the genitals to reflect the mounting anger of the people. Raja Katijah from Riau, who belonged to the royal family of Sultan Husain, came forward to express that burning anger (*Syair Tenku Perabu*, 1994:58) in these words:

Raja Katijah shouted out

“Whose ass is torn to shreds?”

If that so-called thing of Keling’s is not involved

Yet the people in turn are asking him to rise?

The custom pertaining to the ruler and his non-Muslim subjects is reflected in Articles 17 and 21 in *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)*. It was important to maintain a harmonious relationship with the people of various religions and backgrounds because it was their presence that was generating the national economy of Singapore, which was expanding rapidly as a port and trade centre in the Malay world in the early 19th century. However, the author describes the ruler as taking too much interest in his non-Muslim subjects until he employed them as workers in the palace in place of the Malays themselves. Sultan Husain Muadzam Syah’s action in marginalizing his own race provoked the people to anger. The author of *Syair Tenku Perabu* (1992: 79-80) illustrated this hatred, which inadvertently sparked ‘racism’ in the country, based on the excerpt below:

The advice of men of old

To all of us concerning everything

The Indians are a despicable race

They are forever causing a din.

Those of cursed descent are condemned in vain

Those who are banned by the ancients

Should not be allowed to eat at the same table

Should not be allowed to enter the home.

CONCLUSION

Syair Tenku Perabu carries a message of protest by the author that is very clear and straightforward. The characters portrayed by the author are characters that actually

existed in the history of Johor-Singapore, such as Sultan Husain Muadzam Syah, Tengku Perabu, Abdul Kadir, Raja Katijah and so on, as mentioned by Abdullah in *Hikayat Abdullah* (1953: 354-355), “Hence, when I arrived in Singapore, I heard all kinds of news about what was going on in the palace of the Sultan of Singapore, such as the reason why she was in love with a Peranakan Indian from Malacca [...] That reason was indecent in the eyes of all the officials”. Based on the objectives of this study, it was found that *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)* was a guidebook (*kitab*) for all the rulers in the Malay world since the time of Aceh in the 17th century. Every ruler who desired peace during his administration had to apply every article in this book (*kitab*) to his leadership. That is why *Tajus Salatin (The Crown of Kings)* was so famous in the Malay city state right up to the Johor-Singapore era. Even though Sultan Husain Muadzam Syah also used this constitutional literature as a guide during his reign, it was found that the customs (*adab*) observed by the ruler of Singapore were not in line with this, as depicted in *Syair Tenku Perabu*. Consequently, Sultan Husain Muadzam Syah was labelled as a weak leader until the supremacy and power of the Malays in the Lion City were crushed at the hands of the colonialists.

References

- Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib. (1980). *The Concept of Education in Islam*. Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM).
- Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib. (2001). *Risalah untuk Kaum Muslimin*. Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC).
- Andaya, L.Y. (1975). *The Kingdom of Johor, 1641-1728*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press.
- Asma Ahmat. (1994). Adab Raja-Raja: Satu Naskhah Melayu Genre Adab. *Jurnal Filologi Melayu*, 3: 119-134.
- Bagley, F.R.C. (Trans.). (1964). *Al-Ghazali's Book of Counsel for Kings (Nasihat al-Muluk)*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Barnard, Timothy P. (1994). Taman Penghiburan: Entertainment and the Riau Elite in the Late 19th Century. *The Malaysian Branch of Royal Asiatic Society (MBRAS)*, 67(2): 17-45.
- Braginsky, V.I. (1993). *The System of Classical Malay Literature*. Leiden: Koninklijk Voor Taal, Land- en Volkenkunde.
- Braginsky, V. I. (1998). *Yang Indah, Berfaedah dan Kamal: Sejarah Sastera Melayu dalam Abad*. Jakarta: INIS.
- Braginsky, V.I. (2000). Tajus Salatin ('The Crown of Sultan') of Bukhari al-Jauhari as a Canonical Work and an Attempt to Create a Malay Literary Canon. In. Smyth, D. (Ed.) *The Canon in Southeast Asia Literature*. Surrey: Curzon Press.
- Brakel. (1969/1970). Persian Influence on Malay Literature. *Abr-Nahrain*, 9: 206-221.
- Cheah, Boon Kheng. (2006). *Pengadilan Moral, Hukum Syarak dan Hak Asasi dalam Sejarah Melayu*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Geldern, H.R. (1942). Conception of State and Kingship in Southeast Asia. *Far Eastern Quarterly*, 2:15-30.

- Grinter, Catherine Anne. (1979). *Book IV of the Bustan Us-Salatin: A Study from Manuscripts of a 17th Century Malay Work Written in North Sumatra*. Tesis Ph.D. University of London.
- Fatimah Embong. (1982). *Beberapa Aspek dalam Kitab Taj us-Salatin*. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Jelani Harun. (1996). Bustan al-Salatin: Konsep Sejarah Dunia dari Perspektif Historiografi Islam. *Dewan Sastera Mac*: 34.
- Jelani Harun. (1999). Bustan al-Salatin: Karya Sejarah Dunia (Universal History) dalam Pensejarahan Melayu Tradisional. *Jurnal Ilmu Kemanusiaan* 6: 1-33
- Jelani Harun. (2001). Kitab Kumpulan Ringkas Berbetulan Lekas: Karya Ketatanegaraan Melayu yang Terakhir. *Sari* 19:133 – 158.
- Jelani Harun. (2003). *Pemikiran Adab Ketatanegaraan Kesultanan Melayu*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Jelani Harun. (2004). Pemikiran Melayu Tentang Keadilan Raja: Satu Analisis Berdasarkan Karya Adab Ketatanegaraan. Dlm. Worawit Baru Haji Ahmad Idris (Ed.). *Pemikiran Melayu Tradisi dan Kesenambungan*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Jelani Harun. (2005). Ilmu Firasat Melayu. In. Rogayah A. Hamid, Mariam Salim (Eds.). *Kepustakaan Ilmu Tradisional*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Jelani Harun. (2006). Sahibul Kitab Sultan Zainal Abidin: Adab Ketatanegaraan Kesultanan Trengganu. In. Rogayah A. Hamid. *Kesultanan Melayu Trengganu*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Jelani Harun. (2009). *Bustan al-Salatin (The Garden of Kings): A Malay Mirror for Rulers*. Pulau Pinang: Penerbit Universiti Sains Malaysia
- Johns, A.H. (1961). The Role of Sufism in the Spread of Islam to Malaya and Indonesia. *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 9: 143-161.
- Khalid M.Hussain. (1966). *Taj Us-Salatin*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Khalif Muammar A. Harris. (2011). Ilmu Ketatanegaraan Melayu Abad ke-19: Kajian Terhadap Karya Raja Ali Haji. *Sari*, 29(1): 79 – 101.
- Marrison, G.E. (1955). Persian Influences in Malay Life (1280-1650). *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 28: 52-69.
- Milner, A.C. (1982). *Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.
- Milner, A. (1994). *The Invention of Politics in Colonial Malaya: Contesting Nationalism and the Expansion of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mohd Aris Othman. (1983). The Sultanate as the Basis for Malay Political and Cultural Identity from a Historical Perspective. *Sari* 1 (2): 161-174.
- Mohd.Norizam Jamian dan Shaiful Bahri Md.Radzi. (2013). In Search of a Just Leader in Islamic Perspective: An Analysis of Traditional Malay Literature from the Perspective of Adab. *Asian Social Science*. 9 (6): 22-29.
- Mohd.Norizam Jamian dan Shaiful Bahri Md.Radzi. (2016). Traditional Malay Literature and the Generation of Knowledge. *Pertanika*. 24 (5):87-96.
- Moorhead. F.J. (1963). *A History of Malaya*. Kuala Lumpur: Longmans of Malaya Ltd.
- Muhammad Hj.Salleh. (Ed.). (1994). *Syair Tantangan Singapura Abad Kesembilan Belas*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.

- Nor Asma Ab.Aziz dan Muhd. Norizam Jamian. (2016). Akhlak Pemimpin dalam Hikayat Iskandar Zulkarnain: Satu Analisis Pendekatan Adab. *Jurnal Melayu*. 15 (1):50-66.
- Shafie Abu Bakar. (1996). *Sastera Islam dalam Peradaban Ummah*. Simposium Serantau Sastera Islam. Brunei: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Brunei.
- Siti Hawa Haji Salleh (Ed.). (1992). *Bustan al-Salatin*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Siti Hawa Haji Salleh. (2010). *Malay Literature of the 19th Century*. Kuala Lumpur: Institut Terjemahan Nasional Malaysia Berhad.
- Shah Rul Anuar Nordin dan Nik Kamal Wan Mohamed. (2014). 'Impak Dakwah Kitab Taj al-Salatin kepada Masyarakat Melayu di Aceh'. Dlm. Anuar Puteh dan Ahmad Irdha Mokhtar (Eds.). *Da'wah and Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Perspective*. Pusat Kajian Dakwah Orang Asli dan Pribumi, UKM, Bangi, Selangor.
- Winstedt, R.O. (1979). *A History of Johore 1365-1895*. Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (Reprint). No. 6.

