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**THE RELATIONSHIP OF TERENGGANU WITH THE MALAY
STATES UNDER BAGINDA OMAR'S RULE**

Siti Aisyah Jasni (a), Nur Liyana Mohd Sukri (b)*, Azmi Arifin (c)

*Corresponding author

(a) Senior Lecturer, History Section, School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, azmiarifin@usm.my.

(b) MA student, History Section, School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, aisayah.jasni@gmail.com

(c) MA student, History Section, School of Humanities, Universiti Sains, Malaysia, liyanasukri93@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper re-examines the affiliation between Terengganu and the Malay States as their association on the close friendship and solidarity (nationhood) relations. This study focuses on how far did Baginda Omar plays his role in building good relationships between the Malay states since Terengganu also did establish links with foreign powers such as the British, Siamese and Dutch in ensuring the stability and the safety of Terengganu. With the reference to the collections of Baginda Omar's private letters (ANM SP 6), it was found out that the development of the Terengganu's relationship with the Malay states in the 19th century certainly has its own strength and uniqueness compared to the previous rulers. Through the leadership and wisdom of Baginda Omar, he was not only succeeded in strengthening his relationships with the Malay States, but also at the same time acting as a protector to the other Malay states from Siam and British intervention. Any action taken by Baginda Omar was done prudently and diligently in order to maintain good terms with the foreign powers. Based on the information contained in ANM SP 6, it clearly demonstrates that the roles of local rulers are important in balancing good relations with the Malay States and foreign powers in the 19th century.

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1. Introduction

In reviewing all writings related to the history of the Malay states in the 19th century, it is clearly shown that Malaysia historical study so far focused only on discussions regarding the external relations between the Malay states and with foreign powers such as China, Srivijaya, and Siam by linking the changes of regional maritime trade diaspora as an important aspect. According to Mokhtar (2005), diplomatic relation is a structured relationship arranged between governments and forms the basic structure for relations between countries using wisdom and diplomacy in all official matters between nations. Meanwhile, Holsti (1983) stated that diplomatic refers to all forms of interaction between members of the various societies (states) whether supported by the government or not. In simple words, a diplomatic relationship is a close collaboration between two or more governments, either in terms of social relations, cultural, religious, economic or political as long as they share similar interests.

For Salmah (2017), this relationship would not only to meet the gaps or mere common interest, and even the government should act by focusing on the methods of formulating, arranging and controlling those established diplomatic relations closely so that the relationship will not be easily disrupted by any external threats. But in discussing the relationship that exists among the Malay states in the 19th century, writers cannot simply use the term diplomatic relation to see how these states managed to cooperate with each other as that relation is more to the mutual agreement among governments that share similar interests. So the question right now is, how does colonial administrators, Western and local scholars claims that in the 19th century, all the Malay states were experiencing a period of decline due to the conflict arising among the Malay rulers since there were some Malay states such as Terengganu under the reign of Baginda Omar from 1839 until 1876 managed to handle the state's relationships with foreign powers such as British, Siam and Dutch, and also Terengganu's relations with other Malay states like Pahang and Lingga.

Milner (1982) stated that to the foreign observer, the political conditions in the Malay world in the 19th century appeared to be unsettled. He also added that European administrators were particularly critical on the Malay political conditions. Like writings by Frank Swettenham, he wrote that the Malay states have "no political institutions" (Swettenham, 1901, p. 70) and even his point was supported by Hugh Clifford, believing that the Malay people possessed "no rights either of person or of property" (Clifford, 1927, p. ix; Hooker, 1970, p.35). From these statements, we can conclude that these observers convey that there was no proper administration appeared in the Malay territories as the Malays had lived under "absolute and cynical autocracies" (Clifford, 1927, p. ix; Emerson, 1964, p. 255). Meaning the Malay states were lacking in governmental or legal structures which is quite different from the Western states. If the Malay states did not possess a structured administration, how does the state of Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu which not yet been tempered by the British influence managed to arrange and sustain all sorts of relations with the outsiders in controlling influences that could jeopardize the state stability? Therefore, based on the collections of Baginda Omar's private letters as the main contributor, this study will focus on arrangement and strategies made by Baginda Omar in maintain the relationship between Terengganu with other Malay states such as Pahang and Lingga while balancing the state relations with foreign powers like the British, Siam and Dutch who were at that time trying to extend their influence in that region.

2. Problem Statement

Up until now, there has been no further study regarding the affiliation between Terengganu with other Malay states such as Pahang and Lingga in the 19th century period. Previous studies have shown less emphasis on the role of Baginda Omar in building relationships with the other Malay States, which at the same time maintaining good relations with the foreign powers like the British and Siam. Besides, there are no further studies that illustrate more on the type of relationships between Terengganu, Pahang and Lingga in the context of the association on the close friendship and solidarity (nationhood) relations. As a whole, to learn more about the roles of the Sultan and its administration, it is essential to emphasize the use of Baginda Omar's private letters as it reflects the real situation that happens in Terengganu during the 19th century.

3. Research Questions

Based on the evidence contained in Baginda Omar's letters, the important issue arises or been debated is what types of relationships does Terengganu and the other Malay States possessed? And how does Baginda Omar, as the state leader able to build a good relationship with the other Malay States and stabilizing relationships with foreign powers while maintaining peace to his state.

4. Purpose of the Study

4.1. To emphasizes the affiliation between Terengganu and the other Malay States by referring the collections of Baginda Omar's private letters (ANM SP 6).

4.2. To analyses the role of Baginda Omar as a Terengganu ruler in in building a good relationships between the Malay states and with foreign powers such as the British, Siamese and Dutch in ensuring the stability and the safety of Terengganu.

5. Research Methods

For this writing, qualitative methods were used in re-examine the leadership of Baginda Omar as the Terengganu ruler. The 171 letters of Baginda Omar (ANM SP 6), written in classical *Jawi* were used as the primary source in analysing the findings of the study.

6. Findings

6.1. The concept of vassal relations and friendship

The context of diplomatic relations in the Malay world, this concept has actually existed since the pre-Islamic times. Abdul Rahman and Mahani (2007, p. 55) has pointed out that the aspects of the external relations in the Malay Archipelago have begun through trading networks during the development of Islam in 14th and 15th centuries through the close ties that existed between China through several ports such as Guangzhou (Canton) with the Malay world. The nearest example is Campa, Langkasuka and Kedah Tua. These kingdoms have also established diplomatic relations with some of the major powers during that

period such as China, Arab and India (Mohd Jamil, 2011, p. 71). For these factors, this interrelated relationship was further expanded through trading activities, the strengthening of the Hindu-Buddhist religion and the expansion of political influence. As a result, these activities had made the Malay kingdom have a secured position in terms of administration and state security. In short, this diplomatic relationship that existed in the Malay world was formed on a relationship based on a link between the port and regional trade alone.

But to discuss the relationship that lingers among the Malay states, it is difficult to just rely on the definition of diplomatic relations solely to see how these states managed to handle those relationships while maintaining the stability of the state. For this case, the appropriate definition in defining the external relations between the Malay states is a form of undivided loyalty between the governments. Traditionally, these concepts have been a legacy for the kingdoms that exist in the Malay Archipelago as a sign of respect and in safeguarding the sovereignty of the respective kingdoms that share the same identities and culture. However, most of today's writings have less discussion on the concept of vassal and friendly relations between the Malay states more deeply.

There are some writings that highlight this issue such as Abdul Rahman and Mahani (2007), Barbara Andaya and Leonard W. Andaya (1982) and others in emphasizing the relationship process that exists among the Malay states. Usually, the relationship established among the Malay states is based on the boundary relationship between the two governments which have similarities in terms of socio-cultural values. For example, the relationship between Kedah and Perak began to be intertwined through the understanding the problems and affairs faced by these two states. This relationship can be seen from the mutual agreement between Kedah and Perak through a water supply contract in Bukit Panchur to Parit Buntar which was signed by Sultan Abdul Hamid (Sultan of Kedah) with Sultan Idris (Sultan of Perak) on October 17 1893, for Perak to obtain water from Kedah (Mohd Kasturi, 2011, p. 154).

Since the founding of Terengganu sultanate institutions, the sultans have implemented diplomatic ties with outsiders as a process for building and strengthening the position of the sovereignty of Terengganu. Diplomatic relations conducted by the sultans of Terengganu among other Malay rulers were among the strategies taken to avoid possible external threats that could disturb the political and economic stability of the state. But during the reign of Baginda Omar, Terengganu's relationship with the Malay states such as Pahang and Lingga was more on to a mutual and loyalty relationships and these efforts of him were clearly shown in his letters.

6.2. The Relationship between Terengganu and the Malay States of Pahang-Terengganu

Since the 18th century, during the reign of the first Sultan of Terengganu, Sultan Zainal Abidin Shah (1725-1733), the relationship between the government of Terengganu and Pahang has long been recognized. However, at the outbreak of the Pahang Civil War (1857-1863), the relationship between Terengganu and Pahang became tense following the actions of Baginda Omar supporting the rebels. This war occurred due to the power struggle between with Wan Ahmad ibni al-Marhum Dato' Bendahara Siwa' Raja Tun Ali (1863-1914) (Kalthum, 1986, p. 5). It happens right after Bendahara Tun Ali (1806-1857), the previous ruler of Pahang died in 1857 (MISBAHA 1961, p. 100) and his firstborn son, Tun Mutahir or Dato' Bendahara Seri Maharaja Tun Mutahir ibni Dato' Bendahara Siwa' Raja Ali Tun Ali (1857-1861) was

appointed as Bendahara Pahang to replacing his father's position using the title of Bendahara Seri Maharaja. But, the true reason behind Wan Ahmad's rebellion was due to the failure of Tun Mutahir in handing over all the revenue earned from Kuantan and Endau districts to Wan Ahmad, as it has been instructed by their father. To make things worse, Baginda Omar decided to side with Wan Ahmad that fortified in Kemaman which eventually led to tension between Terengganu-Pahang (Kalthum, 1986).

However, his actions surprised the British. Based on a letter dated April 19, 1858 (ANM SP 6/51), although the Resident Counsellor of Singapore, Henry Somerset Mackenzie had no problem with Baginda Omar's actions in providing protection to the victims of Pahang Civil War who fled to Terengganu, as some of them even had fled to Singapore, but the British in Singapore were not happy to hear the news. In fact, the Governor did not believe in the news because for him, Baginda Omar was unlikely to make his own decisions without telling the British. This is because Baginda Omar was warned by the British not to act alone, following the events of Kim Eng Seng's crew

... the Temenggong of Johor [Temenggong Daing Ibrahim] had already informed the Lord Governor that Our Friend [Baginda Omar] has given assistance to Enchik Wan Ahmad, but the Government here has declined to believe it. As a matter of fact, we do not wish to say that Our Friend would do such a thing without informing us beforehand. So the Lord Governor has refused to listen to any rumours. Therefore, he has decided to go to Terengganu himself at the end of the month. To continue, Our Friend's position is clearly that a Raja who is not subject to anyone's command; Our Friend has the power to make war or peace without the need to seek permission of the English Government (ANM SP 6/ 51).

In May 1858, Governor of Singapore, E.A. Blundell himself came to talk with the Bendahara Tun Mutahir in Pahang and then headed to Kuala Terengganu to meet Baginda Omar. From the discussion between Baginda Omar and Governor Blundell, Baginda Omar was asked to call on Wan Ahmad to settle in Terengganu to prevent him continuing to launch attacks on Pahang state.

When the war between Tun Mutahir and Wan Ahmad was still ongoing, on November 27, 1859, Baginda Omar received a letter from Tun Mutahir, reporting the rebellion of Tok Raja Panglina Kiri Wan Embong bin Maharaja Perba Jelai in Pahang (ANM SP 6/29 (2006/0035148)). If we examine the contents of the letter, Tun Mutahir seems to be in trouble as he still needs to solve the problem with Wan Ahmad and now came a new problem; the rebellion of Wan Embong. Through a letter sent by Tun Mutahir to Tengku Endut in Terengganu on January 21, 1860, it contained full details of the reasons for Wan Embong's desire to rebel. This is what Paduka Cunda wishes to inform about Wan Embong who has caused the disturbance. Paduka Cunda is at a complete loss, because it lies beyond the comprehension of this ignorant Paduka Cunda as to the meaning behind the disturbance made by Wan Embong and why Tok Raja Wan Embong and his children would all say they have no other master except for His Exalted Majesty Seri Paduka Cunda Baginda [Sultan Mahmud Muzaffar Shah]. From what I heard, His Exalted Majesty Seri Paduka Cunda Baginda's own subjects who are being ravaged by him! (ANM SP 6/30 (2006/0035091))

From this letter, the government of Terengganu was seen to be the only place for Tun Mutahir to recount the problems that had taken place in Pahang. Based on that letter, it seems Baginda Omar did not interfere much on the problems faced by the state of Pahang. It is likely possible that Baginda Omar adheres

to the instructions from British for not interfering with the administration of other states. Although he did not disturb Pahang administration, Baginda Omar was ready to send any support in terms of necessities for battles like a boat. (ANM SP 6/30 (2006/0035091)).

With the uncertain situation in Pahang, the arrival of Sultan Mahmud Muzaffar Shah from Lingga (1823-1864), Baginda Omar's nephew, also added another tension to the relationship between Terengganu and Pahang.

6.3. Lingga-Terengganu

Initially, the relationship between the Terengganu and Lingga was very good. However, since the Sultan of Lingga, Sultan Mahmud Muzaffar Shah (Tengku Mahmud: title after being deposed from the throne) (Milner 1982, 53-71) was fired by the Dutch who took over Lingga administration, his presence in every Malay state such as Pahang, Terengganu, and Singapore was disliked by the British. He was crowned as the Sultan of Lingga in 1835 when he was very young. After the death of his father, Sultan Muhammad on July 20, 1841, Sultan Mahmud Muzaffar Shah was later in full control over the administration of Lingga. Throughout the reign of Baginda Omar from 1839-1876, Sultan Mahmud Muzaffar Shah's letters to Terengganu were among the most widely available in the collection of Baginda Omar's personal letters. Those letters reveal a close and sometimes difficult relationship that arises due to the family relationship between an uncle and a nephew. In fact, this relationship became more complicated due to the unwillingness of Baginda Omar to fulfil the demands of his nephew who looked increasingly troublesome. However, it is clearly shown from these letters that he often sought advice from Sultan Mahmud Muzaffar Shah such as on how to deal with the Dutch and British, but also relying on the Sultan Lingga for any external news and moral support. For example, during the arrest of a pirate ship in Terengganu waters, Sultan Mahmud had re-responded to Baginda Omar's letter that wanted the Sultan Lingga to be present in Terengganu to help resolve the cases.

...and further, on the matter of the Lord Judge...plaint upon Paduka Ayahanda, in Seri Paduka Anakanda's view, Terengganu is presently governed by Siamese rules and it is the Siamese which had ordered the capture of these trouble-making junks; and so it would be appropriate for Paduka Anakda to respond to the Lord Judge...with this. In the meantime, Paduka Ayahanda would understand the rest. It will be great if Paduka cooperates and confer with all the elders, in order to seek a way to escape from this obligation. Regarding this matter. Seri Paduka Anakanda has already asked Paduka Ayahanda Raja Muda Riau to seek a conference with the Resident of Riau (ANM SP 6/10 (2006/0035071)/ (2006/0035186).

From this letter, Sultan Mahmud agreed that Terengganu actually falls under the jurisdiction of Siam, therefore if any arrest on the Chinese pirates is condoned according to the Siamese Law, then this case should be filed to Governor-General in Batavia for further investigation. Sultan Mahmud also added that any decision should be made between Baginda Omar and his administrators only, and Sultan Mahmud was only able to assist in obtaining advisory services from the Resident of Riau regarding this case.

During the case of the death penalty to the Kim Eng Seng's crew, Sultan Mahmud also did send a letter to Baginda Omar for expressing his view regarding the Baginda Omar did the right thing to punish

those people who were suspected as pirates because they were found guilty according to the laws of the Malay Rajas. Based on the letter from Sultan Mahmud to his uncle, the Governor said that the arrest of those pirates actually should not even concern the British nor the Dutch. According to the Batavia Governor, Terengganu is a sovereign state free from British's influence. Thus, Sultan Mahmud conveyed his relief when hearing the news from Batavia because to him if the Terengganu government was destroyed, so will Riau and Lingga who would receive the same fate.

...Wa-ba 'dahu kalamu' l-madhkur, now Seri Paduka Anakanda wishes to inform Paduka Ayahanda about the matter regarding the Chinese pirate junks which were seized and whose Chinese were arrested. The Chinese were found guilty and were then been executed according to the laws of us, the Malay Rajas. Seri Paduka Anakanda already forward all evidence related to this case had been conveyed in a letter to the Governor-General of Batavia. Then, approximately after more or less forty days later, a reply arrived from the Gavenour to Seri Paduka Anakanda, saying that Paduka Ayahanda should not be worried about the case; because if this is the way of the Raja of Terengganu, then in our mind it would not be all that wrong in the eyes of the laws of the English Company or the Dutch Compagnie. After all, Terengganu was not under the legal jurisdiction of the English Company, because they have different Rajas and each one has their own respective forms of rule (SP 6/11 (2006/0035187)).

Each of the letters (ANM SP 6/8 (2006/0035184); ANM SP 6/10 (2006/0035186); ANM SP 6/6 (2006/0035182)/ (2006/0035125); ANM SP 6/16 (2006/0035192) dan ANM SP 6/15 (2006/0035191)/ (2006/0035076) sent by Sultan Mahmud to Baginda Omar before 1857 was mostly written in beautiful languages and even a close family relationship between these two rulers can be seen in those letters. In the opinion of the researcher, the presence of Baginda Omar in Lingga for 9 years after being banished in 1831 is likely to further strengthen the relationship between the nephew and the uncle. Even when Sultan Mahmud was proclaimed as Sultan Lingga in 1835, Baginda Omar was still in Lingga at that time. Therefore, it is not surprising if Baginda Omar and Sultan Mahmud Muzaffar Shah often send letters to each other in getting opinions to solve problems in their administration. From all information contained in the private letters of ANM SP 6, it can be seen that the relationship between Baginda Omar with the former Sultan of Lingga, Raja Mahmud Muzaffar Shah was initially very closed and have a tied bond as Baginda Omar had been indebted to Lingga for helping him during his 9-year of exile.

7. Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, it is obvious that Terengganu and the Malay states have been making a connection not only focusing on diplomatic links, but also on friendship and solidarity relations. In the Collection of Baginda Omar's Private Letters (ANM SP 6), those letters evidently show several important pieces of information regarding the relationship between Baginda Omar and other Malay rulers such as Pahang and Lingga. It also came with the information regarding Baginda Omar's ways of balancing the relationship with external powers such as British and Siam. Each letter either from Baginda Omar or from others, every languages and praise written were carefully been picked in order to respect both parties.

Although some of the relationships were in ups and downs, Baginda Omar and his trusted advisors managed to overcome the problems they might face. The main priority of having the relationship is to safeguard the state starting with a formulation of strategies and actions that were taken by the state ruler

himself. Thus, from the above discussion, the claims made by colonial administrators, Western and local scholars saying that in the 19th century, all Malay states were experiencing a period of decline due to the conflict arising among the Malay rulers since there were some Malay states is unreasonable. Although there was a chaotic moment during the era, Terengganu under Baginda Omar's administration from 1839 until 1876 seems to be in a stable condition as they were able to forge ties with other states.

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