

Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Syah On the Socio-Economy of Terengganu, 1920-1942

Norazilawati Abd Wahab

Department of Nationality and Entrepreneurship
Faculty of General Studies and Advanced Education
Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA)
Email: norazilawatiwahab@unisza.edu.my

Zuliskandar Ramli

Institute of Malay World and Civilization (ATMA)
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
Bangi Selangor, Malaysia
Email: ziskandar@ukm.edu.my

Mohd Firdaus Abdullah (Corresponding Author)

Centre for Research in History, Politics & International Affairs
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
Email: mfa@ukm.edu.my

Abstract

The reign of Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Shah (1920-1942) was a remarkable period in the history of Terengganu. Sultan Sulaiman not merely focused on the fishing industry, but recognised the importance of diversifying the economic activities of Terengganu, a state known for its primary coastal economic activities. The British Assistant Adviser posted in Terengganu, Major H.S. Peterson, confirmed in the early 1930s that the economic development of Terengganu had been proceeding smoothly. This situation indicated that the Sultan was aware of the importance of a more diversified economy to reduce dependence on a single industry for the sustainability of the state and its people. Hence, the aim of this article was to explore the extent of economic success in Terengganu during his reign in the 20th century. In addition, it assessed the development of the textile, copper, and boat industries and how Sultan Sulaiman's involvement and actions established them as significant economic forces in Terengganu during the stated period. The study employed a qualitative method that involved the collection and analysis of data from primary sources obtained from the National Archives (Kew Garden), namely CO 840/1 (Terengganu

Administration Report, 1920-1930) and CO 840/2 (Terengganu Administration Report, 1931-1940). The files of the Secretary State for Terengganu (1920-1942) were also used and obtained from the National Archives of Malaysia and the Terengganu Branch of the National Archives. Furthermore, secondary sources such as journals, books, book chapters, and magazines were used to corroborate the study. The research findings indicate that Sultan Sulaiman, despite being the son of Sultan Zainal Abidin III, successfully forged his own leadership identity and credentials. He even encouraged women to get involved in various economic fields at that time. Moreover, the education system, especially in the textile industry, was emphasised due to the interest of his queen, Tengku Ampuan Mariam, in the handicrafts produced by the people of Terengganu.

Keywords: Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Syah; Terengganu Socio-economy; British Malaya.

Introduction

“The state of Terengganu, founded approximately 300 years ago, is not a ‘tabula rasa’ or an empty land devoid of

humanity, history, and civilization.” (Abdul Rahman Embong, 2012)

The observation is not particularly surprising, considering Terengganu’s historical presence in the Nusantara dating back to ancient times. References from Chinese, Indian, Arab, and later European navigators since the early Christian era attest to its enduring significance. Terengganu’s stature as an advanced state across various aspects, including the economic and political sectors, has left a lasting impact due to its governing system as early as the 19th century (Abdul Rahman Embong, 2012).

The argument above is somewhat delicate. This article contends that government control over the political system is pivotal for a state’s development. This perspective has merit as it asserts that political stability is crucial for reinforcing the economic system and simultaneously influencing the socio-economic aspects of a society.

“Those having torches will pass them on to others,” so says Plato. His statement depicts that glory and excellence will be passed on to individuals or administrators in the future. Plato’s contention rings true at least for the State of Terengganu. Following the demise of Sultan Zainal Abidin III around 1918, the mantle of Terengganu’s governance was taken over by his son, Tengku Muhammad II (1918-1920) (Syed Husin Ali, 2008). During the rule of Tengku Muhammad II, Terengganu signed an agreement on May 24, 1919, which placed the state under British influence. With the enforcement of this agreement, it directly authorised a British Advisor to directly participate in Terengganu’s administration, except in matters of Malay customs and the Islamic religion.

Sultan Muhammad II’s rule, however, did not last long – only 18 months and 10 days. His brother, Tengku Sulaiman, later

assumed the title, *Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Shah*, in his place, after he abdicated the throne. This was due to the former’s difficulty in adjusting to the existing political system, its demands, and the directives of the new British Advisor, J. L. Humphreys (Ruhaizan Sulaiman@Abd Rahim, Ishak Saat, and Ruzaini Sulaiman @Abd Rahim, 2019; Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, 1991).

It is interesting to note that, just as the British saw weaknesses in Sultan Muhammad II, the British saw it too in Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Shah’s reign, perceiving him as a feeble ruler, akin to his brother, particularly in economic matters, so at least they thought. It is the contention of this paper that the British could never have been more grossly mistaken than this interpretation of Sultan Sulaiman.

This study believes that Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Shah (mentioned only as Sultan Sulaiman from here on)’s rule was indeed successful and had truly ushered significant changes across various socio-economic activities in Terengganu. To achieve this end, primary sources have been consulted, namely, the Colonial Office Records CO 840/1 (Terengganu Administration Report, 1920-1930), CO 840/2 (Terengganu Administration Report 1931-1940), and the Terengganu State Secretary’s Files.

Establishing the British wrong in their assessment of Sultan Sulaiman is not only necessary and important for the sake of historical right, it is also because the administration of and the socio-economic changes brought about by Sultan Sulaiman have never been academically addressed comprehensively before. Our discussion is also intended to bring a new perspective to the history of Terengganu and the socio-economic history of the Malay Peninsula itself.

Research Background

Illustration 1: Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Syah



Source: Terengganu State Museum

Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Syah, the prince of Sultan Zainal Abidin III, ascended to the throne of Terengganu at the tender age of 22. In 1331 AH, he married Tengku Mariam, the eldest princess of the Sultan of Pahang, and the union blessed them with nine princes and princesses (Arba'iyah Mohd Noor, 2006). According to Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, preceding the rule of Sultan Sulaiman, several great rulers in 20th-century Terengganu had already initiated diverse transformations. Starting with Sultan Zainal Abidin III (1881-1918), the Sultan contributed greatly to the formation of Islamic laws, as well as Islamic reforms. Among the main laws established by the Sultan was the legal compendium of *Itqan al-Muluk bi Ta'dil al-Suluk*. The enactment of *Itqan al-Muluk bi Ta'dil al-Suluk* in 1911, also known as the constitution for the State of Terengganu, marked as the highest written law in Terengganu at that time. This constitution was formulated to safeguard Terengganu from external control, notably from the British. Through the establishment of *Itqan al-Muluk bi Ta'dil al-Suluk*, Terengganu

asserted its sovereignty effectively during that period (Norazilawati Abd Wahab et al., 2022).

As briefly mentioned earlier, Sultan Muhammad II's reign was rather brief, lasting only for about two years, from 1918 to 1920. It witnessed minimal changes in Terengganu's economic, political, and social scene. The subsequent rule of Sultan Sulaiman (1920 – 1940) however, marked a remarkable improvement. During this period, Terengganu not only flourished in fisheries, owing to its rich coastal resources, but also gained recognition for various economic activities such as textiles, copper production, boat manufacturing, and rice cultivation. This situation showed that despite the negative perception of the British, the state, under the Sultan's leadership, became more competitive than ever before, thereby dispelling previous preconceived notions of Sultan Sulaiman.

Research Methodology

This study delved into historical investigation, employing qualitative research methods. To achieve research objectivity, various actions and processes, including criticism, analysis, heuristics, and historiography, were undertaken.

The primary sources driving this study include CO 840/1 (Terengganu Administration Report, 1920-1930) and CO 840/2 (Terengganu Administration Report, 1931-1940), obtained from the National Archives (Kew Garden). The State Secretary's Files of Terengganu (1920-1942), obtained from the National Archives of Malaysia and the Terengganu Branch National Archives, were also utilised to reinforce the study. In addition, secondary sources, comprising journals, books, book chapters, and magazines from the University of Malaya Library, Terengganu State

Museum, and Terengganu State Public Library, were also used.

Commencing with the heuristic process, this research began by gathering relevant materials and sources. The subsequent process was source criticism, where the acquired sources were compared with other records such as books, journals, scientific exercises, and the like. This process is crucial for determining the truth and validity of the obtained sources, thereby eliminating inaccurate information related to the research topic. Following that, the analysis process, involving conclusions based on primary and secondary sources, was carried out. This process produced a synthesis of the stated sources and ultimately generated research findings. Finally, this study concluded with the historiography process, encapsulating the writing of history.

Achievements of Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Syah

Economic Development

Expansion of Economic Activities among Malay Women

The achievements and successes of Sultan Sulaiman can be observed from various perspectives, particularly in the way he further developed the state economy. A closer examination revealed his significant contributions to the advancement of several key economic activities, with a noteworthy impact on the economic involvement of the Malay women. One of the primary activities was the textile industry. Given that his queen, Tengku Ampuan Mariam, had a strong interest in textile weaving, combined with the skills of the Malay women in handiwork, he successfully transformed the textile industry in 1921. The participation of 7,341 Malay women in the textile industry in Terengganu that very year serves as a testament of the transformation.

The women's active involvement led to the production of Terengganu textiles, especially, the woven *songket*. Each was being sold at a price of \$0.60. This enabled the Malay women to earn up to \$2 a day for four pieces of woven *sarong* fabric, depending on the quality of the produced material. Despite taking four days to complete one piece of woven sarong, what is more important is that they still managed to generate their steady income. "*The payment for weaving sarongs is usually \$2 for five pieces (the materials being provided by the employers): each piece takes an average of four days to weave.*" (*The Annual Report of The British Adviser Trengganu For The Year 1921*). The strength of the women's labour, working between five and eight hours a day, served as a significant income source not just for them, but also for the state. In 1937 for instance, an entrepreneur named Che Mek binti Ishak successfully earned an income of \$600 from the sale of her gold-threaded *songket*, at a Kuala Lumpur exhibition (B.A.T. 138/1937). The impact of this success directly opened up significant opportunities for women to contribute to their families.

There were other economic activities too that the women were engaged in as well at that time. One of them was repairing fishing nets for their men, their husbands, who were fishermen and had to go out to the sea to earn a livelihood (Norazilawati Abd Wahab, 2022). In this particular economic activity, historical record indicates that in 1924, 61 women were involved in repairing fishing nets, compared to only 11 men. It reflects women's readiness during that period to do whatever it took to ease their families' financial burden, encouraged further by the Government to diversify their economic activities (*The Annual Report of The British Adviser Trengganu For The Year 1923*).

In addition to the textile industry, His Majesty also targeted rice cultivation among Malay female farmers. According to J.E. Nathan's 1921 report, the number of female farmers engaged in rice cultivation in all Terengganu districts by then has reached 32,790, surpassing the 24,509 male farmers. As J.E. Nathan further observed, "*when once the ploughing and preparation of the soil are finished, most of the work in the rice fields, especially as the harvest approaches, is done by women.*" Some of them even took the initiative to seek income opportunities as far as the Straits Settlements (NNS) to market various economic products, including their cultivated rice. In 1921, a total of 1,617 Malay farmers migrated to NNS and 1,324 female farmers to the Federated Malay States (NNMB). They not only sold rice, but also delved into trading cloth, fishery products, and sewn clothing. This proves that Terengganu women harboured a genuine desire to seek better sources of income to assist their husbands (J.E. Nathan, *The Census of British Malaya*, 1921). With this level of involvement, rice production increased by 438,671 piculs in 1939 compared to 409,068 piculs in 1938 (C.L.M. 279/1940).

Terengganu's male population then comprised, first and foremost and most proficiently as boat entrepreneurs, while the females were predominantly rice farmers. This was in fact observed by a British official who visited Terengganu in 1925 when he noted, "*they are more industrious and diligent women workers than any I have yet met in the Malay Peninsula, and they are clever and efficient workers.*" (*The Annual Report of The British Adviser*

Terengganu For The Year 1925 (Appendix), 39).

One of Sultan Sulaiman's highlights was His Majesty's robust support for women's effort, especially in providing paddy seeds, restructuring the paddy irrigation system, introducing irrigation systems for smooth rice cultivation, and providing land for free cultivation by women farmers. These initiatives fuelled significant development in rice cultivation in Terengganu. As a result, Terengganu successfully obtained substantial income from rice exports in 1925, totalling \$1,227,728 (*The Annual Report of the British Adviser, Terengganu For The Year 1926*). Not only that, female farmers also secured commendable earnings rates in paddy cultivation, ranging from \$0.20 to \$2.50 depending on the land area. Despite fluctuating situations due to changes in the monsoon conditions occurring in Terengganu, these income rates generally demonstrate that female wages back then were sufficiently high to support family life (Abd Wahab, 2022).

The high involvement of women in rice-growing activities has proven that this task has been traditionally seen as a way of life by the Malays since the early days. Besides serving as a side income, rice cultivation held significant popularity within the Malay communities. In Malaya, paddy is symbolically perceived as a "lady spirit", embodying the features of a beautiful, young, fair, and attractive woman (Rahimah A. Hamid, 2010). This belief has never changed until the capitalists arrived in Malaya around the 20th century. Till then, rice growing was fundamentally important for the Malay women (Mahani Musa, 2005).

Illustration 2: Malay Woman Harvesting Paddy



Source: Terengganu State Museum

In augmenting the income of the populace, including the Malay women, Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Shah had, in actuality, demonstrated his successful effort. This is particularly so if we were to consider that, around the mid-20th century, women were predominantly confined to assisting their husbands in seeking financial income. In addition, the successful initiatives undertaken by the Sultan and the state government had helped increase the capabilities and skills of female textile entrepreneurs and farmers in Terengganu in producing various products and creating food sources, thus challenging previously held notions of their economic activities.

Brass Manufacturing among Male Entrepreneurs

Not just the women, Sultan Sulaiman also valued men as one of Terengganu's economic contributors. Since brass manufacturing was viewed rather differently due to the methods of brass making that utilised traditional technologies such as furnaces and conventional tools, this also inspired the Sultan to propel this activity as one of the industries that can contribute to the state economy (Norazilawati Abd Wahab, 2014). Brass-making activity was one of the fine artwork that had caught the

interest of His Majesty, Sultan Sulaiman. He helped progress the industry further. Brass-making technique is very exquisite and is complimented with decorations of art patterns. This exquisiteness had convinced the Sultan to preserve the legacy that had already long existed within the Malay communities. The advancement of brass-making activities provided huge opportunities to the local entrepreneurs because art decorating and styling of shapes through motifs have promised sizeable returns to the entrepreneurs and even to the state (SUK. Tr. 138/1354).

On June 8, 1935, in an effort to feature the brass products, the Sultan encouraged local entrepreneurs to participate in nationwide exhibitions in Malaya and overseas. For the Sultan, expositions such as the Terengganu Agricultural Exhibition held at P.W.D. Workshop (B.A.T. 54/1936) by the colonial British were excellent creative platforms for the Malay community to produce and showcase their products (B.A.T. 651/1935:SUK. Tr. 161/1348). The agricultural exhibition was one of the policies of the government to promote the manufactured products available in Terengganu. The recognition of brass products, later governed under the Village Industries Section, also encouraged the

proliferation of better, positive, and creative ideas among the local entrepreneurs (Malayan Agri-Horticultural Association (MAHA), 6th Malayan Exhibition, 3-6 August 1928). Usually, the selected brass products in the exhibition organised by the Malayan Agri-Horticultural Association (M.A.H.A.) were classified under Group Two, the Brass Craftsmanship Group (The Malayan Agricultural Journal, Kuala Lumpur: Caxton Press LTD, Jil. 27, 1939). The recognition given was proof that actions by the government were able to transform the livelihood of the local community towards producing better and more profitable products (C.L.M. 249/36). In 1936, contributions of \$10 up to \$200 were provided to the entrepreneurs as special government assistance for venturing into the brass-making activities (L.O.T. 404/1936).

In 1938, the Sultan agreed to provide some allocation for each district in preparing to host the yellow brass and white brass exhibition activities at \$250 each in Kemaman; \$400 in Besut; \$200 in Ulu Trengganu; and \$150 in Ulu Dungun (C.L.M. 279/37). From the government's point of view, the aid given had provided some means to transform the lifestyle of the Malay communities, as a recorded statement reads:

It is therefore of my notion that it will be of great benefit to hold such an exhibition of this nature year after year as a means to advocate on the working of crops and craftsmanship in this territory where the people are poor in their endeavour to carry on with life, as it is (C.L.M 279/37).

Basically, the concept of aid provided by the government was not solely to garner

profit, but also for the purpose of assisting entrepreneurs to be able to gain knowledge and wisdom in other fields of the economy, apart from the textile industry, which is directly capable of influencing the surroundings and progress of local Malay culture:

I hereby recommend the bestowment of money of the value \$500/- for the expenses to govern the exhibitions, \$200/- to Kuala Terengganu to Kemaman and Dungun \$100/- to Besut. Thereafter, you shall acknowledge the benefits for the common people of such exhibitions thus allowing the progress of crops and craftsmanship and elevate knowledge and wisdom. Bring forth for due consideration (C.L.M. 283/1352).

The advantages and benefits experienced from the exhibition programmes became the basis for accepting brass-making activities in the local communities. Therefore, as a testament to support from the Sultan, the services of boy scouts were also used for security measures throughout the exhibition. However, the services provided were not free, and the government still charged a reasonable fee of \$39.95 sen for each group that participated in the exhibition programme. The acceptance of each exhibition activity by the upper class was shown by the Sultan's actions, who always paid a visit to the exhibition venue. The encouragement provided by the Sultan contributed to the development of the state economy. Thus, this had created a form for interaction between the visitors and traders (C.L.M. 279/37).

Table 2: Listing of Well Known Brass Entrepreneurs in Terengganu in 1938

No.	Name of Entrepreneur	Distinctive skills in the Field of Brass Making
1	Man bin Mat	Clay Forming (Basin)
2	Jusoh A. Rahman	River Clay Patching
7	Wan Idris Ali	Copper Pouring
8	Wan Nik	Rough Copper Carving (Lathe)
9	Samsudin Ismail	Smooth Copper Carving (Lathe)

Source: C.L.M 279/37, Agricultural Show Ulu Trengganu 1938

With the flourishing of Islam in Terengganu, reinforced by the establishment of the Terengganu government's legislative body, *Itqan Al-Muluk Bi Ta'dil As-Suluk*, many economic activities in the region began gravitating towards the strength and influence of Islam (Norazilawati Abd Wahab et al., 2022). In 1939, Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Shah exemplified this by presenting a copper tray to Al-Syed Abdul Rahman (a royal relative of Singapore) as a symbol of a good friendship. In his view, guests should be treated well, similar to how Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. conducted diplomatic relations with other nations (L.O.T. 105/1357). "Together with this letter, four white copper trays made by Terengganu craftsmen are to be given to Al-Syed Abdul Rahman as a sincere token of remembrance, with the hope that they will be considered." These copper items were transported to Singapore via a large ship using the Terengganu government's telegraph form. His efforts had a positive impact on the state's economy, leading to successful copper exports totalling \$14,536.71 in 1939 (C.L.M. 111/40).

Not only that, the religious influence held by Sultan Sulaiman was also evident when a copper basin was created to facilitate the public in performing ablution at the mosque or surau before praying in the year 1939 (Norazilawati Abd Wahab, 2014). As the year 1940 approached, the copper industry's

activities continued to thrive, with a strong emphasis on Islamic elements by Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Shah.

What is intriguing is the creation of a copper product by two well-known entrepreneurs at that time, namely the "bekas bara," or coal container. Encik Mat Omar (Encik Mat Taukeh) and Encik Abdullah Haji Ali created the "bekas bara" using the wax removal through casting technique from white copper, which at the time represented a highly valuable artistic idea (SUK. Tr. 103/1355). The design of this coal container consists of four separable parts: first, a stupa-shaped lid; second, the coal compartment adorned with decorative motifs featuring tuberoses flowers and bean patterns as handles; third, the body adorned beautifully with motifs of hanging bees, fern shoots, sour mangosteen fruit, and bean patterns; while the fourth is the base or covering with hanging bee motifs. The beauty of the creation and design of the copper container, with dimensions of 119 cm in height, 72.5 cm in width, and a weight of 114.7 kg, was well-suited. The strong religious influence and the high Islamic values embodied by Sultan Sulaiman transformed the coal container into not only a fragrant incense holder in the mosque, but also a versatile item used in various ceremonies such as feasts and memorial gatherings. This showcased the grandeur of Islam at that time (SUK. Tr. 103/1355).

Illustration 3: Ember Censer



Source: Terengganu State Museum

In 1940, the lost-wax technique, in which molten white brass is poured into a wax model mould, became a very valuable artistic idea that still exists today (SUK. Tr. 103/1355). Through his endeavour, it is clearly seen that it was one of the many achievements and successful efforts made by the Sultan during his reign in Terengganu.

Establishment of “Primate City” in Terengganu

From 1900 to 1941, Kuala Terengganu was experiencing very rapid growth. With the status of a Primate City then, it had expedited the development of various infrastructures in Terengganu. However, according to Sulong Mohamad, the truly remarkable expansion of the Town occurred during the reign of Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Syah, which began in 1920. Terengganu experienced very significant socioeconomic reform during that time, such as the construction of roads and large markets to facilitate the people conducting business, the installation of streetlights, providing pipes for clean water, the construction of drains and drainage, allocating zones for the development of businesses and industries, and telephone installation, for the convenience of the local

community (Norazilawati Abd Wahab, 2014).

Besides that, other Towns were also experiencing transformation and development, though it was rather limited. In Chukai, for example, in 1920, the port was constructed so that trading activities could be done efficiently. Not only that, the port was developed to make it easier for large ships to berth, as large ships require sufficient space and depth of water. In order to ensure a seamless development programme in Terengganu, the Sultan approved the road construction within the Towns to connect all settlements in Terengganu and to other states. In the mid-1920s, the roads within and between the Towns were constructed. 145 miles of roads were fully operational in 1927. With the roads built, Terengganu was then complemented with an advanced Town system during the Sultan’s administration (Annual Report Social and Economy Progress States of Trengganu, 1934; Government Printing Office, Singapore, 1935).

Illustration 4: Pinis Gobel Big Boat (Junk Rig) Berth Actively in Kemaman, 1920



Source: Seafaring and Trade Gallery in Maritime Museum, Kuala Terengganu.

Promoting the Boat Building Industry

When routes on land were not yet explored, boats and sailboats became the main connectors for local communities in Terengganu to sustain their lives. The

requirements for such transportation were more in demand due to the transformation processes of the Malay communities towards other economic orientations, which promised much larger profits. Furthermore, the Terengganu communities were made up of seafarers, fishermen, and traders; therefore, boats were obviously an important mode of transportation (Auni Abdullah 2001). Therefore, during the rule of Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Syah, the boat building industry for big boats or sailboats started, and it became the main mode of transportation.

The Sultan also supported the Malays in engaging themselves in boat building. The

Sultan gave such encouragement since he saw that the Malays in Terengganu were very skilled in big boat craftsmanship (Norazilawati Abd Wahab et al., 2021). Due to Terengganu being a coastal state that was quite advanced in fishing activities, this led to the support of Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Syah towards boat construction, especially for fishing purposes. As a result, the production of various types of boats among blacksmiths or boat builders in Terengganu became increasingly vigorous around the year 1935. His actions led to an increase in the export of fishery products by \$813,606 in 1938 compared to \$666,201 in 1937 (C.L.M. 279/1940).

Table 3: The Number and Type of Boats Ordered by Terengganu State Government to be Used as *Bot Penambang* (Water Taxi), 1935

Type of Boat	Number of Application
<i>Perahu Besar</i> (Big Boat)	118
<i>Perahu Bedar</i> (Sailing Junk)	46
<i>Perahu Panjang</i> (Long Boat)	116
<i>Perahu Payang</i> (Fishing Boat)	7
<i>Perahu Dalam</i> (Deep Boat)	25

Source: SUK. Tr. 163/1334 Hantar Notis Memohon Perahu

According to Yusoff Hashim, from 1920 to 1921, Terengganu witnessed the onset of peak fisheries development due to affordable prices for trade and commerce (Muhammad Yusoff Hashim, 1991). Moreover, during this period in Terengganu, various economic advancements unfolded, opening approximately 90,000 job opportunities in coastal areas, especially in Besut, Marang, and Merchang, particularly in fishing and boat-making activities (J.E. Nathan, 1921). In full support of the local residents' involvement in boat manufacturing, the ruler also provided assistance of \$1,000 to four main districts, namely Kuala Terengganu, Kemaman, Besut, and Dungun, in 1936 to be distributed among all boat builders, ensuring

the progression of boat production. Additionally, the ruler granted space to the people, including boat builders, to participate in exhibitions not only in Kuala Lumpur, but also in Kuala Terengganu, and Kemaman was a primary focus (C.L.M. 249/36).

The delivered big and small boats will be given a special registration number as tagging to indicate the boats are permanent property of the government (SUK. Tr. 163/1334). Efforts to intensify boat-making activities within the local community were even initiated by the government by standardising the registration of the Pinis big boats with the numbers 183. Looking at the change that has happened, the role of the

government, especially the Sultan, is definitely important in the efforts to further advance the boat-making activities of small and big boats.

The main focus for the government was fishery activities. Through fishery activities, the boat-making industry was seen to have better potential to grow as there was high demand from traders and local fishermen. Added by the huge interest in fish-based produce such as crackers, salted fish, *belacan* (shrimp paste), fish balls, and many others, it promptly raised the government's efforts to provide more boats, big boats, and fishing boats, especially for deep sea fishing (G.W. Earl, 1971). With the encouragement and assistance, as well as the acceptance by the fishermen of the facilities provided, the fishing yield increased year over year. For example, in 1937, the total export of fisheries products amounted to \$666,210.00 (Customs Department: Annual Report 1936 and 1937).

Illustration 5: Big Boat Named *Seri Telaga*, 1925



Source: Seafaring and Trade Gallery in Maritime Museum, Kuala Terengganu.

Despite the selling price of a big boat was between \$500 and \$600, with some fetching as much as \$800 per boat, the demand remained robust owing to the exceptional craftsmanship characteristics of boats from that era. Crafted from hardwoods like *Cengal* and *Seraya*, the intricate work involved drying the wood under the hot sun

for four months, which truly resembles the high quality and the real evolution of a boat. The exclusive use of Cengal wood in Terengganu boat construction, known for its strength in navigating deep seas, further enhanced the vessels' durability (Nur Alia et al., 2022). Therefore, it was unsurprising that Terengganu had successfully produced and sold as many as five large boats at premium prices at that time. Besides Wan Kadir, Nakhoda Cik Ali was also one of the renowned big boat makers during the 20th century (B.A.T 1011/1935).

Social Development

Progress of the Malay Women's Education System

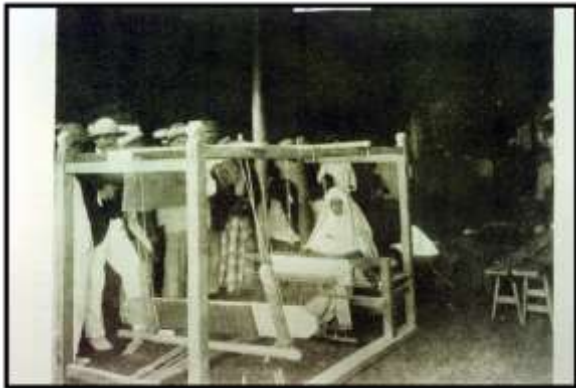
At the early stage of British involvement during the colonisation, the education system introduced was just a form of basic education, or low grade only. This is because the British at that time did not want the Malay children to receive a high education, as they believed that having a high-level education might cause them to form a constant resistance (Arba'iyah Mohd Noor, 2009). The awareness sparked within those in the government, complemented by the Sultan's background in Malay and English education, has drawn interest in the requirement of a formal education system. At the time, the first vernacular schools were formed throughout 1920 in Chukai, Kemasik, Paka, Marang, Setiu, and Besut while the Sultan Sulaiman English School was founded around 1921. The establishment of English schools was due to the Sultan's aspiration to see Malay officers servicing the government administration as competent in the English language (Norazilawati Abd Wahab, 2014).

In the mid-20th century, the Malay elite began to demonstrate significant changes, including their views on the education of Malay children. It was not just English

education that was emphasised; craftsmanship education also became a concern for them to promote. As evidence, on March 4, 1937, a special craft school for women was established based on their recommendation (B.A.T. 995/1938). The establishment of this school proved successful, aligning with women's inherent interests in activities such as weaving, dyeing, and crafting. Because of this natural inclination, it facilitated the arrangement of the curriculum implemented in the school. As a primary step in advancing the Tengku Ampuan Mariam School, weaving subjects were introduced. This broadened educational and training opportunities, aiming to enhance social mobility, including for women entering the labour market.

Education was deemed crucial to meeting economic needs based on knowledge. With the existence of an education system for Malay women, it automatically refuted the British perception that Malay women were solely capable of undertaking family-related tasks (Norazilawati Abd Wahab, 2022).

Illustration 6: Terengganu Malay Woman Carrying Out Weaving Activity Using a "Kir".



Source: Terengganu State Museum

The medium, which was fully extended to all the women by the elites of Terengganu, was very impactful. Apart from that, to further equip the learning activities at the school, in 1938, a skilled teacher in weaving

lessons, Abdul bin Ilyas, was selected to teach at Tengku Ampuan Mariam School. The government chose him as the specialist teacher due to his experience in textile dyeing and colouring, which he had gained during his training at Sultan Idris Training College Kuala Kangsar (SITC). His valuable experience had caught the interest of the government in appointing him as a specialist teacher at the school. With the vision to ensure a manufacturing economy can be developed in the school, the government has certainly planned to select the finest and most experienced teachers in the fields being introduced (SUK. Tr. 660/1357).

I hereby convey with regards to the lessons for the female students (at Tengku Ampuan Mariam Education House) whereby the lessons provided to the students are not just about writing, but also teachings of handiworks. In my opinion, it is very important to assign a specialist educator, and the students should be trained by brilliant and skilled teachers reassigned from Paka and Kemaman. Dyeing of silk using non-colorfast fabric paints; weavings from silk thread (songket) or gold thread and imprinting of batik sheets; fine handworks of weaving made from local plants from the land of Terengganu; lace borders or cushions for motorcars or chairs (B.A.T. 995/1938 Memorandum from Terengganu Chief of Education to Terengganu State Secretary in Benevolence on August 29, 1938).

Table 4: The activities carried out in Tengku Ampuan Mariam School, 1938

Activity of dyeing of silks using non-colourfast fabric paints
Activity of weaving using silk (songket) threads and gold threads
Activity of batik sheets imprinting
Activity of weaving using plant leaves
Activity of stitching lace borders for pillows and chairs

Pekerjaan Pertukangan Bagi Murid-murid Sekolah Perempuan Terengganu, 6 September 1938

Source: SUK. Tr. 660/1357

For the continuation of success in the handicraft education field, exposure to knowledge related to handicraft was considered very important by the government at that time. These forums were envisioned as platforms to cultivate a more innovative female workforce, fostering independence in the future (SUK. Tr. 660/1357). Based on women's emancipation before the Second World War, Frank Swettenham made a remark on the attitude of Malays towards girls' education. According to Swettenham, since the Malays were very much tied to the culture to the extent of controlling their daughters from accepting external education besides religious studies, this has somewhat restricted the education for women in the 20th century. Recognising this historical deprivation, sultans began to change those perspectives by upholding women's status in educational aspects (SUK. Tr. 922/1359). As a result, the products and handicrafts of women in Terengganu began to penetrate the market, both local and external. These handicrafts garnered recognition even in Western countries, such as Glasgow and London, notably in 1938. With the capital given by the government to elevate women's status, this had successfully provided an avenue for all entrepreneurs to market their products in more commercialised settings (Annual Report of the Social and Economic Progress of the People of Trengganu, 1938). The Sultan's dedicated effort and support had a profound impact on women who had received their education in handicraft schools, especially

when their woven products, like the Gold Thread Cloth Songket, were exhibited internationally in London (Handbook to British Malaya 1937).

Illustration 7: Silks on Display at Malaya Court Empire Exhibition, 1938



Source: The Malayan Agricultural Journal, Kuala Lumpur: Caxton Press LTD, Jil. 27, 1939

Mobilising the Role of the Terengganu Health Board to Improve the Health Status of Women

A good health system would pave the way for broader economic opportunities (Norazilawati Abd Wahab, 2014). Thus, to prioritise the well-being of the populace, the Terengganu Health Board initiated health control measures for all traders conducting businesses in Kedai Payang Market, Cabang Tiga Market, and Tanjong Market. The initial focus was on the installation of streetlights and maintenance of urban sites, especially areas involving markets selling vegetables and fishery products, as well as industrial products such as textiles, handicrafts, and brass. The placement of

streetlights around the Kedai Payang Market was intended to assist traders who conducted business during the night. This is because Kedai Payang Market, along with several other markets, emerged as focal points for the people of Terengganu. The market served as a hub for the Malay community to engage in business activities and a crucial source of livelihood for the local residents. The bustling trade activities were not confined to the morning hours; in fact, buying and selling continued well into the night (Terengganu Annual Report A.H. 1438, 8th June, 1929-27th May, 1930). Hygiene control measures in urban areas became imperative to safeguard the health of traders, especially women who conducted their businesses on the sidewalks and were susceptible to dust and dirt (The Annual Report of the British Adviser, Trengganu, 1923).

The Terengganu Health Board's health control measures targeting local entrepreneurs and traders promised an upswing in textile production. These markets, acknowledged as business centres for women to trade, thrived in 1935 (B.A.T. 1094/1935). In addition, His Majesty took the initiative to collaborate with the Terengganu Health Department, proposing visits to villages and trading areas in 1937 to improve the overall health status of the people (*Annual Report On The Social and Economic Progress Of The People of Trengganu For The Year 1937*).

Illustration 8: Malay Women Conducting Business in Market Areas



Source: Terengganu State Museum

Conclusion

Our brief discussion above has shown that the reign of Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Shah from 1920 to 1942 significantly contributed to the progress of Terengganu, evident in several key aspects, namely economic and social development. While Sultan Zainal Abidin III laid the foundation for a politically advanced identity, notably through the enactment of laws known as *Itqan Al-Muluk Bi Ta'dil As-Suluk*, Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Shah distinguished himself by shaping a distinct governance identity. Various economic activities flourished under his rule, with a focus on the economic advancement of the people, including women. Noteworthy initiatives under his leadership included providing capital to boatmen and lead workers, promoting participation in exhibitions, improving public health, and establishing schools to facilitate the progress of the people, especially women. These achievements underscore the strength of a state leader. Sultan Sulaiman Badrul Alam Shah successfully championed a spectrum of economic activities, extending beyond fisheries to include textile, copper, and boat manufacturing. Nevertheless, his administration prioritised Islam as the official religion of the Terengganu government and successfully utilised *Itqan Al-Muluk Bi Ta'dil As-Suluk* as one of the pillars of governance. This included promoting the use of Islamic elements in every economic activity undertaken during his rule.

Acknowledgement

This research was funded by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (KPT) through the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) titled "Pembinaan Model Lestari Warisan Teknologi Perahu bagi Meningkatkan Taraf Tukang Timbal sebagai Satu Kearifan

Tempatan”
(FRGS/1/2021/SSI0/UNISZA/03/5).

Reference

- Abdul Rahman Embong. (2012). *Terengganu Merentasi Tiga Abad: Kesultanan, Politik, Ekonomi, Agama dan Budaya*. Kuala Terengganu: Yayasan Diraja Sultan Mizan.
- Arba'iyah Mohd Noor. (2009). Perkembangan Pendidikan Sejarah di Malaysia dari Zaman Tradisional ke Zaman Moden. *Jurnal Sejarah*, 17: 46-49.
- Auni Abdullah. (2001). *Islam dan Perdagangan dalam Sejarah Alam Melayu*. Kuala Lumpur: Darulfikir Bhd.
- Annual Report Social & Economy Progress States of Trengganu, 1934. Government Printing Office, Singapore 1935.
- Annual Report On The Social and Economic Progress Of The People of Trengganu For The Year 1937.
- Annual Report of the Social and Economic Progress of the People of Trengganu 1938
- B.A.T. 651/1935, Kuala Trengganu Agricultural Show 1935.
- B.A.T. 54/1936, Public Works Department Advance for 1936.
- B.A.T. 138/1937, Fourteenth Malayan Exhibition 1937
- B.A.T 995/1938, Teaching of Handicraft in The Tengku Ampuan Meryam Girl School.
- L.M 279/1940, Manual Report of the Customs, Excise, Chandu, Fisheries and Marine Departments Trengganu for the year 1939.
- C.L.M 279/37, Agricultural Show at Kuala Jengal, Ulu Trengganu 1937.
- C.L.M 283/1352, The Agri-Horticultural Show 1934.
- C.L.M 249/36, Pertunjukan Tanaman di Kampung Raja Besut 1936.
- B. L. M 111/40, Annual Report of The Customs, Excise, Chandu, Fisheries and Marine Department, Trengganu For The Year 1939
- C.L.M 279/1940, Anual Report of the Customs, Excise, Chandu, Fisheries and Marin Departments Trengganu for the year 1939.
- Contribution Towards The Kuala Trengganu Agri-Cultural Show, L.O.T 404/1936.
- Custom Department: Annual Report 1936 dan 1937.
- Earl, G. W. (1971). *The Eastern Seas*, Singapura: Oxford Universiti Press.
- Handbook to British Malaya 1937.
- J. E. Nathan. (1921). *The Census of British Malaya (The Straits Settlements, Federated Malay States and Protected States of Johore, Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, Trengganu and Brunei*. London: Waterlow & Watford.
- Ketua Sampan (Headman), B.A.T 1011/1935
- L.O.T 105/1357, Mengirimkan Dulang Tembaga Puteh Kerana hadiah Kepada Al-Syed Abd. Rahman di Singapura.
- Mahani Musa, 'Wanita Melayu, Kesedaran Pendidikan dan Pembentukan Masyarakat Malaysia Moden, *Malaysia Dari Segi Sejarah*, No. 38.
- Muhammad Yusoff Hashim. (1991). *Terengganu Darul Iman: Tradisi Pensejarahan Malaysia*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Norazilawati Abd Wahab. (2014). Perkembangan Kegiatan Perusahaan dalam Kalangan Masyarakat Melayu di Trengganu, 1900-1941. Disertasi. Universiti Malaya.
- Norazilawati Abd Wahab, Arba'iyah Mohd Noor&Ruzaini Sulaiman@Abd Rahim. (2021). 'Perkembangan

- Kegiatan Perusahaan dalam Kalangan Masyarakat Melayu Di Terengganu, 1900-1941'. *Journal of History Department, University of Malaya*, No. 30 (2): 19-43.
- Norazilawati Abd Wahab, Ruzaini Sulaiman, Arba'iyah Mohd Noor & Mohd Firdaus Abdullah. 2022. Penglibatan Wanita Melayu dalam Memperkasa Sosioekonomi dan Kesejahteraan Hidup Menerusi Penanaman Padi di Terengganu Pada Awal Abad 20. *Akademika* 92 (3): 117-131.
- Norazilawati Abd Wahab, Ruzaini Sulaiman@Abd. Rahim, Arbai'yah Mohd Noor, Mohd Firdaus Abdullah & Noraini Mohamed Hassan. (2022). "Itqan Al-Muluk bi Ta'dil As-Suluk: The Implication of Terengganu Institution 1911 Promulgation". *Journal of Al-Tamaddun*, Vol. 17. No. 2: 25-38.
- Norazilawati Abd Wahab. (2022). Penglibatan Wanita Melayu Terengganu dalam Kegiatan Ekonomi, 1900-1941. *Tesis PhD*. Universiti Malaysia Terengganu.
- Nur Alia Shamsul Bahri, Norazilawati Abd Wahab&Ruhaizan Sulaiman. (2022). 'Tukang Timbal:Sumbangan dan Tradisi Pembuatan Perahu di Terengganu 1950-1980, *Asian Journal of Environment, History and Heritage (AJEHH)*, Jil. 6 (2): 51-71.
- Ruhaizan Sulaiman@Abd Rahim. (2018). 'The Role of Woman In The Terengganu Coastal Fisheries Enterprise Before World War II'. *International Journal Academic Research In Business & Social Sciences*, Jil. 8 (4): 656-673.
- Syed Husin Ali. (1968). Patterns of Rural Leadership in Malaya. *JMBRAS* 41 (1): 95-145
- The Malayan Agricultural Journal. (1939). Kuala Lumpur: Caxton Press LTD, Jil. 27.
- The Annual Report of The British Adviser Trengganu For The Year 1921.*
- The Annual Report of The British Adviser Trengganu For The Year 1923.*
- The Annual Report of The British Adviser Trengganu For The Year 1925 (Appendix).*
- The Annual Report of the British Adviser, Trengganu For The Year 1926.*
- The Annual Report of the British Adviser, Trengganu 1923.
- The Annual Report of The British Adviser Trengganu For The Year 1924.
- Terengganu Annual Report A.H. 1438 (8th June 1929-27th May 1930)
- Rahimah A. Hamid. (2010). 'Piama dan Petua Tradisi: Ilmu Menanam Padi Masyarakat Melayu di Utara Semenanjung Malaysia'. *International Journal of the Malay World and Civilisation (SARI)*, Jil. 28 (2): 211-233.
- SUK. Tr. 138/1354, M.A.H.A Annual Exhibition.
- SUK. Tr. 161/1348, Tanah Liat Tidak Dapat Ambil Bagi Penggunaan Pekerjaan Tembaga.
- SUK. Tr. 103/1355, Hendak Ditunjukkan Tempat Pertukangan.
- SUK. Tr. 163/1334, Hantar Notis Memohon Perahu.
- SUK. Tr. 660/1357, Pekerjaan Pertukangan Bagi Murid-murid Sekolah Perempuan Terengganu.
- SUK. Tr. 922/1359, Hendak Diadakan Pelajaran Bertenun di Sekolah Tengku Ampuan Mariam.