



The history of Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien III's thought on Syair Perlembagaan Negeri Brunei

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated the elite's literary work, which employed traditional writing but presented innovative and progressive ideas. The Syair Perlembagaan Negeri Brunei manuscript is a tangible example of Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien III's conviction in bringing renewal, progress, and development to Brunei Darussalam. This study used a descriptive qualitative method with historical research techniques, including psychological, historical, political, sociological, and theological approaches. This research revealed that Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien III lived as an ordinary citizen from a young age, influencing his life circumstances and thinking. Moreover, the 19th-century Sultanate of Brunei had a political system and administrative structure based on three important institutions at the central government level: Perajaan (Sultanate), Wazir, and Ministers. The Syair Perlembagaan Negeri Brunei also exemplifies Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien's (SOAS) dedication to Brunei Darussalam's progress and development. In the five decades since the Constitution of Brunei's establishment in 1959, the country has made significant progress. Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien III played a pioneering role in allowing the Five-Year National Development Plan in 1955. The Syair Perlembagaan Negeri Brunei highlights the importance of laws and constitutions in a nation's organization and stability. Thus, establishing the Constitution of Brunei in 1959 was a significant step towards achieving full independence and self-rule.

Keywords: Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien (SOAS); Syair Perlembagaan Negeri Brunei; history

1. INTRODUCTION

In the early 1800s, Western countries began expanding into Asian nations, primarily Southeast Asia. This action resulted in the occupation of various regions in the Indonesian archipelago by the Dutch, the colonization of Indochina by the French, the control of the Philippines by the Spanish and later, the Americans and British exerting their authority over Burma, Malaya, and Singapore. This era marked a period when Southeast Asian countries faced the challenges and impacts of Western colonization, including Brunei Darussalam (Siti & Mariam, 2021). British individuals played a role in Brunei's situation, starting with individual interactions and gradually expanding to encompass institutions and, eventually, the British government itself (Ismail, 2013).

The agreement signed between Brunei and Britain in the 1800s marked the beginning of Western dominance over Brunei. This development is evident from the actions of specific British figures, such as James Brooke in Sarawak and the presence of the British institution in North Borneo (now Sabah), which posed significant threats to Brunei's sovereignty and territorial integrity. As a result, Brunei's size has been reduced to what it is today. The formal relationship between the Kingdom of Brunei and the British government began in 1847 with establishment of the Friendship and Trade Treaty. However, the agreement failed to ensure a friendly relationship and protect Brunei's sovereignty. James Brooke, his nephew Charles Brooke, and the British North Borneo Company disregarded the Sultan of Brunei's authority and the sovereignty of Brunei, motivated by their greed, resulting in the loss of Brunei's territory (Ranjit, 1984).

The British government provided support for the growth of these territories. Brunei entered into a Protection Agreement with the British government on September 17, 1888, to avoid further encroachment on its territories. As per the agreement, Brunei was put under the protection of the British government. However, as mentioned in the agreement, the British government was not authorized to interfere with the country's governance (Azrimah, 2013) as stated as follows:

"The state of Brunei shall continue to be governed and administered by Sultan Hashim Jalilul Alam Aqamaddin and his successors as an independent State under the protection of Great Britain. Still, such protection shall confer no right on Her Majesty's Government to interfere with the internal administration of the state further than is herein provided."

The intention behind this agreement was to ensure the sovereignty and continuity of Brunei while respecting the existing Sultanate of Brunei. However, the outcome was quite the opposite. Consequently, on December 3, 1905, and January 2, 1906, Brunei entered into additional agreements with the British government (Ranjit, 1984). These

agreements of 1905 and 1906 placed Brunei under the Resident System, whereby a British Resident was appointed as an advisor to the Sultan; this granted the British government the responsibility of managing Brunei while acknowledging the Sultan's authority solely in matters of Islamic religion and customs (Siti & Maryam, 2021) as stated as follows:

"His Highness will receive a British Officer to be styled Resident and will provide a suitable Residence for him. The Resident will be the Agent and Representative of His Britannic Majesty's Government under the High Commissioner for The British Protectorate in Borneo, and his advice must be taken and acted upon all questions in Brunei other than those of Muhammad's religion."

The British authorities assumed control over the entirety of the kingdom's governance, except for Islamic affairs (Karim, 2013). Acknowledging the validation of Sultan's power vis-à-vis the British Resident, SOAS III, following the demise of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin in 1950, endeavored to reclaim Brunei's government sovereignty and fortify the institution of the Brunei Sultanate. To move closer to independence, Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien (SOAS) established a constitution in advance (Hadi, 2016). The 1959 Constitution of Brunei began with the Sultan's proactive initiative to review and reassess the provisions outlined in the 1888 and 1905/06 Agreements. This evaluation aimed to ascertain the genuine implications of accepting advice from the British Resident as long as it yielded favorable outcomes. This condition implied that the Sultan could not be compelled to accept advice from the British Resident if he deemed it unsuitable.

The action signifies the sagacity and persistent nature of Sultan's vision to regain Brunei's governance by establishing a written constitution. Asbol (2015) stated that Syair Perlembagaan Negeri Brunei (SPNB) is a concrete testament to SOAS's conviction in fostering rejuvenation, progress, and advancement within society and the nation. Additionally, the poem embodies SOAS's unwavering commitment to upholding pure ethics, noble virtues, cultural heritage, Malay identity, and Islam (Rahman, 2016). Notably, it is uncommon for a poet to select a specific historical event as the subject matter for their poetry or poem. However, this is precisely what SOAS committed himself to, meticulously recording the significant event of establishing the Constitution of Brunei, starting from its initial deliberations and endeavors until its actualization on September 29, 1959. His son has continued this vision and dedication of SOAS, His Majesty Paduka Seri Baginda Sultan Haji Hassanali Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam.

One intriguing aspect is the rarity of finding a Malay monarch, apart from Raja Ali Haji and Raja Aisah Sulaiman in Riau, who actively involved themselves in writing, particularly in the 20th Century (Ampuan, 2005). SOAS, being a prolific and highly

regarded poet, stands out in this regard. It is truly remarkable that despite his demanding responsibilities in governing the country (with a reign of 17 years from 1950 to 1967) and his engagement with various writings, he still managed to dedicate time to create literary works (Rahman, 2016). Thus, this study aimed to investigate the historical imprints of SOAS's thoughts within his work, SPNB, which encompasses the formulation of the Constitution of Brunei in 1959.

2. METHODS

This study used descriptive qualitative methods and historical research techniques. Historical research refers to a series of activities used to systematically and objectively reconstruct the past (Nina, 2020). Historians typically begin by locating and uncovering evidence from the past. The choice to use historical research in this study was based on three primary reasons: Firstly, the research question could not be adequately addressed through field research alone. Secondly, conducting a preliminary study in the form of historical research was essential to gain a deeper understanding of emerging phenomena. Lastly, historical data was reliable in addressing the research question (Mahmud, 2011).

There were two sources: Primary and secondary data research (Azizi, 2017). Primary data was the main source obtained directly from the research subject. For instance, *Syair Perlembagaan Negeri Brunei's Manuscript* is located at the Brunei History Center in Bandar Seri Begawan. This undated work by SOAS is written in Jawi script and is part of a collection titled "*Syair Perlembagaan Negeri Brunei*" with the collection number PS/PnB/MS/0000060. In addition to that, the researcher also utilized other sources such as *Syair Perlembagaan Negeri Brunei*, published by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka in Berakas, 1994. The original text was transliterated into Roman script by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (Omar Ali, 1974). The secondary data included supportive sources such as books, journal articles, theses, dissertations, and others. These sources refer to primary data sources and provide additional information to support research (Ananthan, 2015). For this particular research, several secondary data research were used, including "*Penyair Diraja Sultan Haji Omar Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien*," written by Pehin Orang Kaya Amar Diraja Dato Seri Utama Haji Awang Mohd. Jamil Al-Sufri (Jamil Sufri, 1999); "*Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien III and Britain: The Making of Brunei Darussalam*," by B.A Hussainmiya and published by Oxford University Press in Kuala Lumpur (Hussainmiya, 1995); "*The Brunei Constitution of 1959: An Inside History*," authored by B.A Husainmiya and published by Brunei Press Sdn Bhd in Bandar Seri Begawan (Husasaimiya, 2000); "*Brunei: Traditions of Monarchic Culture and History*," written by B.A Hussainmiya and Nicholas Tarling (Hussainmiya, 2011); "*Muda Omar Ali Saifuddien: Resepsi Tokoh dan Karya*," by Ampun Ibrahim Ampuan Tengah (Ampuan Ibrahim, 2016); "*Tujuh Serangkai Dari Perspektif Sejarah*," written by Professor Madya Dr Haji Awang

Asbol bin Haji Mail et al. (Mail, 2015); and "Liku-Liku Perjuangan Pencapaian Kemerdekaan Negara Brunei Darussalam," written by Pehin Orang Kaya Amar Diraja Dato Seri Utama Dr. Haji Awang Mohd. Jamil Al-Sufri (Jamil Sufri, 1992).

In historical research, at least four stages were followed to adhere to scientific procedures (Gottschalk, 1975). The initial phase was called heuristic, which came from the Greek word "Heuriskein," which meant the discovery process. After choosing the subject, the next was gathering information about it. This process involved researching multiple libraries for relevant historical sources (Renier, 1997). The documentation technique was used for data collection in this study. SOAS has passed away, and those closely associated with them were either no longer available or were elderly and frail. As a result, the documentation technique was used to explore and gather information from various sources related to the research topic. The researchers visited several institutions, including the Borneo Research Center, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, the Brunei History Center, the Islamic Library of Brunei Darussalam, the Department of Royal Mufti, University of Brunei Darussalam, and the Seri Begawan Religious Teacher University College to collect these sources.

The second phase was criticism. Criticism is a methodology employed to evaluate the sources required in historical writing. It examined the sources' authenticity (external) and credibility (internal) intended for historical writing. External criticism involved scrutinizing the physical authenticity of historical sources. An illustration of this evaluation process was identifying the author, particularly their handwriting, signature, stamps, and script style (Gottschalk, 1975). In comparison, internal criticism assessed the trustworthiness of the source. Internal criticism must substantiate that the testimony presented by a source can be relied upon; this was achieved by primarily conducting an intrinsic evaluation of the sources and subsequently comparing testimonies from diverse sources (Ismaun, 2001).

The third phase of the historical methodology was interpretation. This step involved interpreting the data after source criticism and categorizing authentic data sources (Abdurrahmn, 2007). However, interpretation introduced subjectivity, which was challenging to avoid since the historians performed the interpretation. Historians aim to provide detailed descriptions of the facts when they interpret historical facts, commonly called analysis. This descriptive analysis establishes connections among the gathered facts, synergizing them. One fact elucidates the position of another fact, thereby achieving a balance between objectivity and subjectivity (Priyaadi, 2013).

The final phase of the historical method was historiography, which involved history writing. This phase required historians to utilize their technical skills, critical thinking, and analysis to produce a comprehensive written work synthesizing all their research. The

significance of the facts gathered could only be fully understood once they were written in a coherent and comprehensive historiographical account. In formulating the research approach, historians draw on approaches from various fields, such as psychology, history, politics, sociology, and theology (Helisu, 1997).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Biography of Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien III

Born September 23, 1914, in Kampung Sultan Lama, Bandar Brunei, His Majesty Sultan Haji Sir Omar Ali Saifuddien (SOAS) III was the seventh son among ten siblings (Jamil, 1987). SOAS was raised by Pengiran Sharbanun binti Pengiran Muhammad, alongside his elder brother, the Crown Prince. Even at a young age, his gentle and refined demeanor was evident, especially during his early language development, where he gradually and clearly understood the meaning of words. As he grew older and gained the ability to communicate and comprehend, SOAS developed a keen interest in listening to the wisdom imparted by the elders. He found great fascination in tales of past brave heroes and discussions on wedding rituals, official ceremony protocols, and related subjects (Hashim, 1999).

From age 10, SOAS began his Quranic studies and religious education. He had over 10 teachers from the common people who helped him achieve the remarkable feat of reciting the entire Quran 40 times. His childhood was marked by the experience of being an orphan and growing up without the guidance of a paternal figure. Despite ascending to the throne as the Sultan of Brunei, he remained grounded and committed to uplifting the people's living standards and the nation's development, placing their welfare above his interests (Hashim, 1999).

During his time as Pengiran Muda Tengah, Sultan Haji Sir Omar Ali Saifuddien III was eager to learn and explore various subjects. He studied martial arts and subjects that aligned with Islamic principles. According to reports, he received education in law from a Chinese scholar named Baba Liam Chong. He learned about development planning from Brunei's first engineer, Pehin Udana Laila Inci Awang Tutong, who hailed from Kampar (Latif, 2003). His formal education began when he attended the Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK) from 1932 to 1936 (Jamil, 1989; Yura, 2003). After completing his studies, Sultan Haji Sir Omar Ali Saifuddien III became deeply involved in societal and state affairs and served as a Cadet Officer in the Forestry Department. This role was new to previous sultans. He expressed this idea in his statement (Kassim, 2016) as follows:

"In my work, I used a parang (chopping knife) and cangkul (hoe) and backed my way through the jungle. I had to put a sign (number) on trees and pull the chain used to get the correct spacing when planting trees."

After spending two years in the Forestry Department, SOAS was assigned to the Judiciary Department until 1938. Between 1940 and the Japanese occupation in 1941, he served as an administrator in the British Residency Department. At the age of 25, on September 6, 1941, His Majesty married Pengiran Anak Damit binti Pengiran Bendahara Pengiran Anak Abdul Rahman, and they had ten children, consisting of four sons and six daughters (Yura, 2003). After the passing of his elder brother, Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin, SOAS was appointed as the first Wazir and was ceremoniously paraded as Duli Pengiran Bendahara Seri Maharaja Permaisuaru on July 15, 1947. He then assumed the position of Chief of the Shariah Court and became a member of the State Council on June 6, 1950. Upon the demise of his elder brother, Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin, SOAS was officially crowned the 28th Sultan of Brunei in 1950 (Kassim, 2016).

His Majesty Sultan Haji Sir Omar Ali Saifuddien III was crowned on May 31, 1951 (on Syaaban in 1370 Hijrah). During the coronation ceremony, he was honored with the C.M.G. by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Later, while attending Her Majesty's coronation in London in 1953, he was further recognized with the K.C.M.G. and bestowed the prestigious title of "Sir" (Jamil, 1985). After becoming the ruler in September 1951, SOAS went on a pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina to fulfill the Hajj. He also visited Mecca again in 1962 as an esteemed guest of the Saudi Arabian government. SOAS followed the tradition of Sultan Bolkiah, who was known for his inclination to travel abroad to learn from other nations and enhance the development of his own country. After his Hajj pilgrimage in 1951, SOAS embarked on an unofficial three-month visit to the United Kingdom in 1952 (Kassim, 2016).

His Majesty Sultan Haji Sir Omar Ali Saifuddien III ruled Brunei for 17 years, from 1950 until October 4, 1967. On that day, the Yang Dipertuan Majlis Musyawarah Mengangkat Raja officially announced that SOAS had voluntarily abdicated the throne and appointed a Regent in 1950, as per Chapter 19 of the Enthronement of the Ruler. SOAS had expressed his intention to step down from the royal position. SOAS faced many challenges and successes during his reign, from Japanese and British colonization to attaining independence. When Brunei achieved full independence on January 1, 1984, His Majesty Paduka Seri Begawan SOAS took on the role of Minister of Defense of Brunei Darussalam. He held this position until his passing in 1986 (Kassim, 2009).

His Majesty Sultan Haji Sir Omar Ali Saifuddien III passed away on the evening of Monday, September 7, 1986, which coincided with the 3rd of Muharram 1407. His funeral occurred on September 8, 1986 (Kassim, 2016). One of the notable contributions

of SOAS to Brunei's modern history was his active participation in the formation of the 1959 State Constitution. The intricate process of constitution-making exemplified his unwavering dedication to establishing Brunei as a sovereign nation (Yura, 2003).

Under the reign of SOAS, significant initiatives were introduced. In 1955, he implemented the Five-Year National Development Plan. The establishment of Radio Brunei followed in 1957, and the Royal Brunei Armed Forces was formed in 1961. Brunei also introduced its currency in 1967. During SOAS's rule, the royal flag of Brunei was crafted, featuring engraved golden cats on both sides, symbolizing the commitment to do good under Allah's guidance. Additionally, the national anthem titled "Allah Peliharakan Sultan" was composed by Awang Besar bin Sagap, with lyrics composed by Yura Halim. It was officially recognized as Brunei's national anthem (Yura, 2003).

SOAS left an enduring legacy by opening the palace for visits during Eid al-Fitr, welcoming people from diverse nations and religions to enjoy feasts and exchange greetings with the royal family. Moreover, the Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque exemplifies his remarkable contributions to Islam's development. This mosque, named in honor of SOAS, stands as a testament to his inspiration, intellect, and creativity, including his involvement in painting the design of the mosque's pulpit (Latif, 2003). Aside from that, SOAS is also known as a royal poet, architect of modern Brunei, and religious figure.

1) Royal Poet

As a king, Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien III deeply appreciated traditional and modern arts. From his early years, he engaged in traditional arts like flying kites, practicing tatak garis (traditional calligraphy), spinning tops, and studying silat (martial arts). He also embraced modern sports, such as football, chess, squash, badminton, swimming, hockey, and speedboat racing. Furthermore, his upbringing involved a strong inclination towards storytelling, conveyed through the narratives shared by his caretakers. SOAS did not merely listen to these stories; he meticulously analyzed and discussed them, nurturing his interest in literature (Latif, 2003). Among the captivating narratives that captivated him were tales of courageous heroes, royal ceremonies, wedding rituals, and protocols within forums (Rayah, 1991).

2) Architect of Modern Brunei

During his 17-year reign, SOAS spearheaded significant modernization in Brunei during the 20th Century. Upon assuming the throne, one of his foremost objectives was to enhance the people's living standards, with a particular focus on social and economic development. The First National Development Plan encompassed numerous projects, including constructing religious and Malay schools, mosques, government buildings,

hospitals and clinics, roads, and free medical and educational services. These efforts also stimulated economic growth and investments (Kassim, 2016).

Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien III played a vital role in education. In the 1950s, schools were established not only in the Malay language but also in English, exemplified by the founding of Maktab Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien. In addition to advancing local education, SOAS encouraged the overseas education of Bruneian students, offering them opportunities to pursue higher studies in Malaysia, Singapore, and the United Kingdom. Addressing the scarcity of local educators, SOAS recruited teachers from the Federation of Malaya, particularly in the 1950s, following the proclamation of the State Constitution in 1959 (Jamil, 1992). Efforts to expand the pool of local intellectuals continued by sending aspiring teachers to institutions like Sultan Idris Training College in Tanjong Malim and Maktab Perguruan Kota Baharu in Peninsular Malaysia. While promoting the welfare of the people through government projects, equal importance was attributed to security and national defense (Raya, 1991).

3) Religious Figure

In addition to his involvement in social and political affairs, SOAS gained renown as a sultan and an eminent religious leader devoted to upholding and promoting the principles of Islam. This commitment was evident in his endorsement of Islam as the state's official religion, as stated in the 1959 Written Constitution. SOAS placed Islam at the forefront of state governance, seeking to propagate its principles and teachings throughout Brunei Darussalam. He aspired to imbue all aspects of the nation's administration and development with the essence of Islam, allowing the religion and its teachings to flourish (Jamil, 2016).

Socio-Political Dynamics of the Brunei Sultanate in the 19th Century

Brunei Darussalam, southwest of Borneo Island (Sabah), is a small and prosperous country. It spans an area of approximately 5,765 square kilometers and has Bandar Seri Begawan as its capital city (Ghofur, 2015). The South China Sea forms its western border, while the rest of its boundaries are shared with Sarawak, one of Malaysia's states. Brunei boasts four significant cities: Belait, Brunei Muara, Temburong, and Tutong. Brunei Muara, renowned as a port city, covers an area of 570 square kilometers. Belait, spanning 2727 square kilometers, is home to oil and gas mines and the village of Panaga, which serves as the hometown for several expatriates. Tutong occupies an area of 1166 square kilometers, and Temburong covers 1306 square kilometers (National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2002).

Brunei is home to diverse ethnic groups, with the majority being Malay, who primarily practice Islam. Approximately one-fifth of the population is of Chinese descent,

while the remainder is of Indian heritage. Presently, Brunei is governed by His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, the 29th Sultan, who assumed the throne in 1967. Under his leadership, Brunei achieved independence on January 1, 1984. Today, Brunei has emerged as one of the developed countries in Southeast Asia (Mahmud Saedon, 1996). During the nineteenth Century, various communities held significance in the Brunei Kingdom, including the Malay community (Yusuf Puteh, 1988), the Iban community (Benedict Sandin, 1967), the Kayan and Kenyah communities (James Luhah, 1988), the Punan community (Hose, 1992), the Kadazandusun community (Ranjit, 2000), and the Chinese community (Henry Keppel, 1853).

In terms of political and economic systems, these communities shared similarities in their political institutions, particularly in appointing leaders. Within the inland communities, which comprised the Iban, Bidayuh, Kayan, Kenyah, Murut, Bisaya, and Kadazandusun people, leaders were chosen based on their charismatic leadership qualities. These leaders played vital roles in administering villages and longhouses, ensuring the enforcement of customs and laws. They also took responsibility for resolving conflicts among community members. When imposing punishments, leaders did not have unilateral authority; they discussed with elders before making decisions.

However, leaders did not possess absolute power to compel their subordinates to follow all their commands. They also acted as intermediaries between the kingdom and the members of the communities and residents of the longhouses. Leadership positions were often passed down through generations. While these positions were unpaid, leaders held esteemed positions in society and received voluntary services from their subordinates in cultivating their crops, resulting in annual yields. The Brunei Sultanate bestowed certain titles upon some leaders, such as Orang Kaya, Datuk Temenggung, and Datuk Pemanca (Benedict, 1967).

Regarding the economy, the Iban, Bidayuh, Kayan, Kenyah, Murut, Bisaya, and Kadazandusun ethnic groups exhibit commonalities as they are involved in agricultural activities, specifically cultivating rice and fruit gardens. Their production serves not only for personal consumption but also for trading purposes and paying taxes to the Brunei Kingdom. Additionally, they actively gather forest resources like camphor, beeswax, bird nests, and rattan, which they sell to Malay and Chinese traders. As for their settlements, they reside in longhouses. Interactions among these communities are often characterized by tension due to the quest for new living spaces and the practice of headhunting, which holds significance in their customary law (Brown, 1979).

Throughout the 19th Century, Brunei was governed by seven Sultans. They include Sultan Muhammad Tajuddin (1795-1804 and 1804-1807), Sultan Muhammad Jamalul Alam I (1804), Sultan Muhammad Kanzul Alam (1807-1826), Sultan Muhammad Alam

(1804), Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin II (1828-1852), Sultan Abdul Momin (1852-1885), and Sultan Hashim (1885-1906) (Mail, 2002). Nevertheless, the researcher narrowed the focus of the study to three specific eras of the Sultanate, aiming for a more concentrated and targeted investigation in alignment with the research title.

1) Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien II (1828-1852)

During Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin II's rule, the Sarawak Uprising occurred around 1836 (Ranjit, 1991). This rebellion was eventually suppressed with the assistance of James Brooke on December 20, 1840. Subsequently, Raja Muda Hashim appointed James Brooke as the representative of the Brunei Kingdom in Sarawak on September 24, 1841 (Keppel, 1846). In February 1846, a tragic mass murder targeted Raja Muda Hashim and his family.

Consequently, James Brooke, accompanied by the British Navy, launched an attack on Brunei in July 1846. The Brunei forces were defeated, leading Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin II to flee (Rodney Mundy, 1848). He eventually returned to the palace in August 1846. Under British pressure, Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin II ceded the island of Labuan on December 18, 1846 (Brown, 1970). Following the transfer of Labuan to the British, Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin II signed the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce between Brunei and Britain on May 27, 1847 (Treaty of Friendship and Commerce, 1849). Regrettably, Brunei's relationship with Britain during his reign did not yield any benefits; instead, the Brunei territory continued slipping into Western powers' hands.

2) Sultan Abdul Momin (1852-1885)

Sultan Abdul Momin entered into a leasing agreement, granting the neighboring Brunei territories in Sabah, stretching from Sulaman to Paitan on the west coast of Sabah, to Lee Moses, the United States Consul in Brunei, on August 11, 1865 (Keith, 1980). Subsequently, this transfer arrangement was handed over to the British North Borneo Company, which received a royal charter from Britain in 1881. However, the Sultan's decision failed to resolve the issue of territorial loss for Brunei; instead, it persisted. Consequently, Sultan Abdul Momin and the Brunei nobility made a collective pledge called the "Oath of Unity" or "Sumpah Umanah" in February 1885. Within this solemn oath, they committed themselves to refrain from surrendering Brunei's territories to foreign powers. Unfortunately, this oath proved ineffective in halting the continuous loss of Brunei's territories (Nicholas, 1983).

3) Sultan Abdul Momin (1852-1885)

After the passing of Sultan Abdul Momin on May 29, 1885, Sultan Hashim assumed his place as the ruler. Under Sultan Hashim's reign, the political situation in Limbang

became unstable when several Brunei Malays were killed there in November 1885. The Sultan deployed Brunei forces to Limbang to capture the perpetrators. Simultaneously, Peter Leys, the British Consul General in Labuan, and Charles Brooke pressured the Sultan to surrender Limbang to Sarawak, as they believed he could not resolve the political crisis in Limbang. However, in 1886, Sultan, his Wazir, and the people of Brunei rejected the demand for Limbang's surrender (Graham, 1986).

Unfortunately, the 1888 Agreement proved ineffective in preventing Sarawak's aggression when the Limbang issue emerged. On March 17, 1890, Charles Brooke, accompanied by his armed forces, occupied the Limbang River and declared the capture of Limbang from Brunei's control. Despite objections from Sultan Hashim, the matter was officially closed by the British Foreign Office in August 1895. The Sultan refused to acknowledge the seizure of Limbang and continued to assert its status as part of Brunei. Eventually, in 1906, Sultan Hashim successfully safeguarded Brunei's interests by signing an Additional Agreement to the 1888 Agreement. This agreement appointed a British Resident to advise the Sultan on administrative matters, excluding Islamic affairs (Horton, 1988).

The Existence of Syair Perlembagaan Negeri Brunei

The Syair Perlembagaan Negeri Brunei (SPNB) studied in this research is one of the poems written by the palace elite. The poem was composed by SOAS from 1953 to 1959. The publisher of this poem is Dato Othman bin Thalib in collaboration with Syed Nasir bin Ismail and Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, as well as the Federation of Malaya. The exact publication date of the poem is not recorded, but it is estimated to be around the 1960s. This poem, printed in Jawi script, consisted of 97 pages, but the actual content was from pages 1 to 89, comprising 1055 verses. Although the poem is called SPNB, its content does not entirely revolve around constitutional matters. The constitutional story is told only up to page 44 or verse 524.

According to Hashim (2016), SOAS' thoughts regarding the Constitution narrated in SPNB were the constitutional negotiations of 1953, the appointment of committees, the committee's journey to Malaya, the formation of a constitutional delegation, the delegation members' trip to London, the constitution drafting process, the signing of the 1959 constitution, and the appointment of government officials. Thus, this study verified the accuracy of these statements. SOAS' desire to establish a written constitution for Brunei was expressed by His Majesty in early May 1953 (Rahman, 2016). SOAS has expressed this desire in the form of a poem (Muda Omar, 1994) as follows:

*Inilah terasul permulaan karangan
Mengambil berkatnya dagang garangan*

*Dapat menyusun syair kenangan
Syair riwayat perlembagaan.*

*Perlembagaan Brunei nama ditara
Setelah dicadangkan untuk negara
Untuk kebajikan rakyat sugara
Memperbaiki nasib derita sengsara*

The second paragraph above highlights the deep concern of SOAS for the Bruneian people who were facing setbacks, oppression, and political uncertainties under the influence of the British. As a result, the top priority for His Majesty was the development of a constitution (Rahman, 2016). A constitution represents the highest legal document of a nation. It refers to significant laws typically issued by a monarch, Sultan, or government (Mail, 2015). Being the supreme law of a country, a constitution encompasses various principles, including the structure and functions of governmental bodies such as parliament, the cabinet, courts, and others. It also encompasses principles related to citizenship, human rights, official religion, language, nationality, and more.

Despite SOAS successfully acquiring power and achieving self-governance within the country through establishing a written constitution, the relationship between Brunei and Britain's governments remained unaffected. Brunei aimed to maintain its relationship with Britain until it could stand independently. The association with Britain was seen as a means to help Brunei prepare for its future independence. To ensure the continuity of both relationships, a friendship agreement was signed through the Brunei State Constitution of 1959 (Damit, 2013).

According to the agreement of Brunei State Constitution of 1959, the British government remains responsible for Brunei's external affairs, defense, and security matters as stated in Article 3 (I). The position of British Resident has been abolished and replaced by a Chief Minister who the Sultan appointed. The Chief Minister assumed the responsibilities previously held by the Resident and will be responsible for the execution of executive powers within Brunei. To ensure the British relationship with Brunei and its position in the country, a British advisor known as the High Commissioner resided in Brunei and was appointed to advise the Sultan and the government in all matters except those concerning Islam and Malay customs. The suggestions must be adhered to. This agreement prohibited Brunei from establishing relationships, agreements, and political arrangements with other countries without the consent of the British government (Damit, 2013).

The effective date of the Brunei State Constitution of 1959 was September 29, 1959. Comprising 12 parts, the Constitution begins with the Preamble in Part I, followed by Part II on Religion. Part III encompasses the Powers of Governance, while Part IV focuses on the Royal Council of Ministers. Part V relates to the Council of Ministers' Assembly, and Part VI centers on the State Council. Part VII addresses the Formation of Laws and Regulations within the State Council. Additionally, Part VIII covers Finance; Part IX pertains to Public Services, Part X discusses the Royal Seal, Part XI addresses Miscellaneous Matters, and Part XII encompasses amendments and interpretations of the Constitution (Sa'adiah, 2013).

This Constitution paved the way for Brunei's initial preparations for self-governance. It upholds the position of Islam as the official religion of Brunei, ensuring its preservation. Thus, the Brunei State Constitution is characterized by four key aspects: Islam as the official religion of Brunei Darussalam in Part II, Malay customs through the 1961 Common Law Act, Part II, Article 82(1). Western influences are evident in establishing three assemblies in Part IV, V, and VI. The governance system is characterized by a monarchical framework in Part III, Article 4(1). The Constitution underscores the shared responsibility of the king and the people in the administration of the state of Brunei (Saadiah, 2013).

Therefore, a Constitution Planning Committee, also known as the "Tujuh Serangkai" was established. This committee was formed to disseminate SOAS's desire to obtain the views and suggestions of the people across Brunei regarding the forthcoming Constitution. They visited all regions to gather information and the people's perspectives, crucial for the Constitution's formation. Additionally, the Tujuh Serangkai was responsible for organizing and compiling the research findings into reports, serving as advisors to SOAS in creating the Constitution. Based on the collected thoughts of the people, the Tujuh Serangkai also visited the Federation of Malaya to study and observe the functioning of the constitutional system in Johor, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Kelantan, and Singapore in 1954 (Hamid, 1999).

Once the Constitution was completed, it was presented in the State Council Assembly. Sir Anthony Abell, the British High Commissioner in Brunei at that time, recommended that negotiations be conducted with the British Secretary of State in London by the end of 1957. A meeting was arranged at the Office of the Secretary of State with Alan Lennox Boyd (Viscount Boyd). SOAS emphasized the importance of executing this significant event carefully and cautiously (Rahman, 2016). The constitutional negotiation efforts, which commenced in 1953, appeared to have yielded unsatisfactory results, prompting the arrival of a legal expert from the Federation of Malaya in Brunei in 1959. This expert was Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang Haji Abd. Wahab was appointed Legal Advisor to SOAS and the Brunei government (Omar, 1994).

After Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang completed and examined the constitutional draft, Brunei government contemplated sending a delegation, led by SOAS and comprising 12 members, to London. The delegation included two constitutional advisors, Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang Haji Abd. Wahab and Mr. Neil Lawson Q.C. The appointment of Mr. Neil Lawson was made possible through the support of Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang himself (Omar, 1994). If presented in numerical form, SOAS departure date was March 14, 1959, at 10:00 a.m. from Brunei (Jamil, 1992). The negotiations in London saw the British government represented by Mr. Alan Lennox Boyd, the Secretary of State for Colonies (Omar, 1994).

Regrettably, during the preparations, Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang passed away unexpectedly on April 10, 1959, causing great sadness (Jamil, 1992). This saddened His Majesty as the absence of Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang would impact the negotiations. Once again, SOAS sought assistance from the government of Malaya to provide a replacement for Dato Panglima Bukit Gantang. The request was accepted, and in response, the government of Malaya sent Mr. Sufian Hashim, the Acting Attorney General of the Federation of Malaya at that time. His Majesty documented this event. (Omar, 1994).

Once the negotiations were concluded and the agreement of both parties was obtained, the signing ceremony took place in London on April 6, 1959 (Omar, 1994). Furthermore, the Constitution was officially signed again in Brunei on September 29, 1959, at the Royal Lapau building at 12:30 p.m. Sir Robert Scott, the High Commissioner of the British Government for Southeast Asia, represented the British government during the signing, while SOAS personally represented Brunei (Omar, 1994).

In essence, the purpose of Tujuh Serangkai's visit was to gather the opinions and suggestions of the people regarding the upcoming Constitution. However, during the visit, the residents in each region also took the opportunity to raise their concerns and needs, leading to two main aspects of the visit. Firstly, they addressed issues directly related to the Constitution. Secondly, they discussed emerging issues that were unrelated to the Constitution. The matters about the Brunei Constitution encompassed the Sultan's authority, and administration, including the positions of Chief Minister, Government Secretary, British Resident, the State Council Assembly, the Malay language, Islam as the official religion, and citizenship. Additionally, proposals unrelated to the Constitution were also considered (Mail, 2015).

The government considered these suggestions and implemented them in the state's development for progress. These matters included selecting village heads and chiefs, security, transportation, healthcare, education, water and electricity supply. Furthermore, even matters deemed to have received less attention from the

government were considered, even if they were not incorporated into the Constitution. These matters encompassed the public administration sector, land issues, oil-related concerns, taxation and licensing, issues related to the pilgrimage to Mecca, military labor, agriculture, livestock farming, village enterprises, salary provisions, and employment (Mail, 2015).

The Impact and Significance of Brunei's State Constitution on Achieving Brunei's Vision 2035

Brunei Darussalam became independent on January 1, 1984, after being under Great Britain's protection for 96 years (Nicholas, 1971). Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, His Majesty Paduka Seri Baginda Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, declared Brunei Darussalam's independence at midnight on December 31, 1983, in Taman Sir Muda Omar 'Ali Saifuddien, Bandar Seri Begawan. The declaration was accompanied by the threefold takbir "Allahu Akbar," preceded by His Majesty's father, SOAS, and witnessed by approximately six thousand attendees. Unlike other former British colonies, Brunei, a protected state rather than a colonial territory, did not have a flag-lowering ceremony (Hadi Melayong, 2016).

Over the last fifty years since the Brunei State Constitution was enacted in 1959, Brunei Darussalam has made remarkable progress and achieved a superior quality of life. This progress is reflected in socio-economic development indicators that are recognized internationally. The country has shown impressive economic growth, infrastructure, and socio-economic well-being. As a self-governing and independent nation, Brunei Darussalam is committed to continuous development by addressing all areas necessary for advancement. This commitment aligns with the principles outlined in the Declaration of Independence on January 1, 1984, and further detailed in the Long-Term National Development Plan and Brunei Vision 2035.

The research result also identified that the oil sector has contributed to developing the country's indicators. It directly funds various stages of the National Development Plans, thus driving the economy forward. Alongside this, effective leadership under the guidance of His Majesty Paduka Seri Baginda Sultan has been instrumental in achieving a series of successes, starting with establishing the kingdom. The significant impact of leadership cannot be ignored. Additionally, the consolidation of the administration, the proclamation of the amended Brunei State Constitution in 2004, and the deliberations of the National Consultative Council (Majelis Musyawarat Negara) have all contributed to the journey toward success (Duraman, 2013).

With the declaration of independence on January 1, 1984, Brunei emerged as an independent and sovereign nation, gaining recognition and acceptance from the

international community, including its membership in the United Nations. This placed Brunei on equal footing with other nations worldwide. The Brunei Vision 2035, which outlines the country's aspirations as a sovereign and independent nation, was explicitly mentioned in the proclamation of independence by His Majesty Paduka Seri Baginda Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, the Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam, on January 1, 1984 (Hazair, 2012) as follows:

"The nation of Brunei Darussalam exists and, with the permission and abundant blessings of Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala (the most glorified), will perpetually remain an independent, sovereign, and democratic Malay Islamic Monarchy. It adheres to the teachings of Islam following the Ahli Sunnah wal-Jamaah. The country's foundation is built upon justice, trustworthiness, and freedom principles. Under the guidance and favor of Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala, Brunei is dedicated to continuously striving for peace, security, prosperity, and happiness for its people. Additionally, Brunei upholds the importance of maintaining international relations and friendships based on mutual respect for the principles of independence, sovereignty, equality, and the territorial integrity of all free nations, while rejecting external interference."

Based on the content of the proclamation, the national vision can be described as follows: 1) Brunei Darussalam maintains its status as a democratic Malay Islamic Monarchy, guided by the teachings of Islam according to the Ahli Sunnah wal-Jamaah. 2) Justice and trustworthiness are essential principles for achieving good governance. 3) Ensuring peace and security within Brunei Darussalam, striving to be a peaceful and secure nation. 4) Promoting the welfare and well-being of its people to achieve prosperity and socio-economic development. 5) Upholding international relations based on mutual respect and non-interference.

These visions and goals play a vital role in shaping the political journey and administration of the country. The government's objective is to establish security, prosperity, and progress for the benefit of its citizens while upholding the nation's reputation. In Brunei, this is achieved by embracing the national philosophy of the Malay Islamic Monarchy, which encompasses various critical aspects such as political stability and governance, commonly known as good governance. This involves effectively implementing laws, policies, regulations, security planning, economic development planning, provision of fundamental necessities like housing, education, social welfare, healthcare, and the implementation of spiritual policies to strengthen the well-being and security of the population (Yura, 2003).

The recognition of the need for independence arose during the reign of SOAS, and it was under his leadership that the five-year National Development Plan (Rancangan

Kemajuan Negara) was first introduced in 1955 (Yura, 2003). Following the succession of his successor, it has made continuous progress, culminating in the ninth National Development Plan in 2008. This plan serves as a guiding blueprint for the thirty-year vision, Brunei Vision 2035 (Kementerian Keuangan dan Ekonomi, 2020).

Through Brunei Vision 2035, Brunei envisions itself as a nation renowned for its educated, highly skilled, and prosperous population, benchmarked against the highest international standards. It aims to rank among the top ten countries in terms of the quality of life for its citizens and possess a dynamic and resilient economy, placing it in the top ten countries in per capita income. To reinforce the realization of this vision and promote economic diversification, the Eleventh National Development Plan (Rancangan Kemajuan Negara Kesebelas called RKN11) centers on augmenting the Non-Oil and Gas Sector. As a result, the esteemed High-Level Wawasan Brunei 2035 Council has endorsed the theme for RKN11, "Enhancing the Output of the Non-Oil and Gas Sector as an Economic Growth Driver." Six fundamental areas of development have been delineated, providing guidance and objectives for implementing programs and projects under RKN11 to support that theme (Kementerian Keuangan dan Ekonomi, 2020) as follows:

- 1) The first core area focuses on elevating the quality of education and training to foster a highly educated and skilled populace.
- 2) The second core area aims to cultivate a workforce aligned with industry demands, prioritizing workforce planning that corresponds to industry needs. This approach will reduce unemployment, lower business costs through fundamental job training, and position the country competitively in attracting foreign direct investment, particularly for bolstering the Non-Oil and Gas Sector.
- 3) The third core area seeks to cultivate a balanced and forward-thinking society capable of producing competitive, highly skilled individuals with unwavering principles and a strong sense of identity based on the principles of the Malay Islamic Monarchy (Hazair, 2012).
- 4) The fourth core area concentrates on fortifying the well-being of the resilient population, emphasizing the continuous and quality provision of essential facilities and necessities.
- 5) The fifth core area aims to enhance the output and contribution of the Non-Oil and Gas Sector to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In this regard, the private sector is pivotal in supporting the development and competitiveness of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, enabling them to penetrate international markets and compete with foreign counterparts.
- 6) The sixth core area centers on strengthening government administration in creating a conducive business environment (Kementerian Keuangan dan Ekonomi, 2020).

Based on the points mentioned earlier, the main aim of this vision is to establish Brunei Darussalam as a reputable country globally. This will be achieved by having: (a) a well-educated, skilled, and prosperous population, (b) high standards of living for its citizens, and (c) a thriving and resilient economy. The ultimate objective for Brunei Darussalam is to be acknowledged worldwide as a nation that exemplifies these attributes.

4. CONCLUSION

Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien III lived as an ordinary citizen from a young age, influencing his life circumstances and thinking. Moreover, the 19th-century Sultanate of Brunei had a political system and administrative structure based on three important institutions at the central government level, namely the Perajaan (Sultanate) institution, the Wazir, and the Ministers. The Syair Perlembagaan Negeri Brunei also exemplifies Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien III's dedication to Brunei Darussalam's progress and development. In the five decades since the Constitution of Brunei's establishment in 1959, the country has made significant progress. Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien III played a pioneering role in allowing the Five-Year National Development Plan (called RKN) in 1955. The Syair Perlembagaan Negeri Brunei highlights the importance of laws and constitutions in a nation's organization and stability. Thus, establishing the Constitution of Brunei in 1959 was a significant step towards achieving full independence and self-rule.

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