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THE GOVERNMENT SYSTEM OF THE SELANGOR STATE UNDER THE BRITISH EMPIRE

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ПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВЕННАЯ СИСТЕМА ШТАТА СЕЛАНГОР В БРИТАНСКОЙ ИМПЕРИИ

Abstract: *This article strives to find reasons behind the British Empire's intervention into the Malaysian peninsula. This research finds that one of the main reasons for the British intervention was due to the trade opportunities and the possible expansions by intervening into the Malay states. Another reason was due to the wars between the various clans of the Malaya population. Lastly, the British did not want the Siamese to intervene in the Malaya states in the future.*

Keywords: *Colonial rule, British Empire, Malay states, Selangor, British Advisors*

Аннотация: Ушбу мақола Британия империясининг Малайзия ярим оролига кириб келиши сабабларини излашга интилади. Ушбу тадқиқот Британия аралашувининг асосий сабабларидан бири Малайзия давлатига кириб келиши орқали савдо имкониятлари кенгайиши билан боғлиқлигини аниқлади. Яна бир сабаб Малайзия аҳолисининг турли хил кланлари ўртасидаги урушлар билан боғлиқ эди. Ва ниҳоят, инглизлар сиямларнинг келажакда Малайя штатларига аралашинишини истамадилар.

Калит сўзлар: Колониал бошқарув, Британия Империяси, Малайя вилоятлари, Селангор, Британиялик маслахатчи.

Аннотация: В этой статье делается попытка найти причины вторжения Британской империи на Малайзийский полуостров. Это исследование показывает, что одна из основных причин британской интервенции была связана с торговыми возможностями и возможным расширением за счет интервенции в малайские государства. Другая причина была связана с войнами между различными кланами населения Малайи. Наконец, британцы не хотели, чтобы сиамцы вмешивались в дела малайских штатов в будущем.

Ключевые слова: Колониальное управление, Империя Британии, Штаты Малайи, Селангор, Британский советник

Introduction. At the end of the 19th century, the British Empire established residencies in Selangor, Perak and Sungei Ujong (a part of Negeri Sembilan) states. One of the main reasons for the British intervention was due to the trade opportunities and the possible expansions by intervening into the Malay states. Another reason, as discussed, was due to the wars between the various clans of the Malaya population. Lastly, the British did not want the Siamese to intervene in the Malaya states in the future. After the British Empire arrived at the Malaysian peninsula at the end of the 18th century, their interest was focused on the economic benefits from these lands.[1:11] A British Resident was appointed to administer finances and other matters with the exception of Malay customs and the Islamic religion. A British Resident was appointed to administer finances and other matters with the exception of Malay customs and the Islamic religion. [2:7]

In 1874, the Pangkor treaty was signed. As Kennedy writes: "In the meeting at Pangkor in mid-January, two important documents were signed, the Chinese Engagement and the Pangkor Engagement. Under the first heading, the Ghee Hin and Hai San leaders undertook to keep the peace under penalty of a fine of 50,000 dollars." [8:157] The Pangkor Engagement dealt with the question of the appointment of the Residents. Sadka explains,

In March 1873, Tengku Zia'u'd-din had granted to Davidson and another party a ten-year

concession to work all the tin land in Selangor not occupied by others yet. Selangor Tin Mining Company was promoted to handle this concession, and their London representative, Seymour Clarke, applied to the Colonial Office for protection for the enterprise. He quoted from the letter written by Tengku Zia' u' d-din to him, asking if the English or any other Government would provide security of the people as well as the property of traders and entrepreneurs. [9:47]

Due to the war situation in the Peninsular Malaya, where local disturbances appeared to endanger, even remotely, the British supremacy in the Peninsula, the Home Government was ready for closer control, hence establishing British Residents. Sadka observes that “The change of policy was communicated to the Straits Government in a dispatch of 20 September 1873. The secretary of State referred to the prevailing anarchy in the Peninsula, the damage to trade, and the need for a remedy.” [9:45] As a result, a new Governor resided in Singapore, Sir Andrew Clarke, who took up his duties in the Straits on 4 November 1873. Sadka explains that “His first report on his proceedings informed Colonial Office that he had settled the Perak succession, had got the Sultan and chiefs to accept a Resident and had posted an officer, Captain Speedy, as an Assistant Resident in Perak, to take up his duties in Larut. Before he left the Straits in May 1875, he had established Residents in Selangor and Sungei Ujong as well.” [9:45] However, Sir Clarke was not rushing to establish residents in Selangor and Sungei Ujong until he was sure that in Perak this appointment proved to be successful to proceed with the others. In September 1874, Clark appointed Swettenham as a Resident of Perak. As a resident of Selangor, he chose Mr. J. G. Davidson. By the end of 1874, the British authorities were acting in Larut, Lower Perak, Klang, Langat and Sungei Ujong. In the beginning, appointed British Residents had no regulations and rules to follow. Residents’ strength depended on how the Straits Settlements office was willing to help the new Residents in any occasion. By the Pangkor Engagement, resident’s role was not strong enough to act widely and interfere in the matters of the Malay politics. Residents were

not allowed to advice and interfere in the Malay religion and customs. However, customs and religion played a crucial role in Malay political and social life. In this situation, residents acted as they could, without relying much on the outside help. Kennedy states, “The early Residents, on taking up their appointment stood very much on their own; if their advice was to be put into practice, they were the one who had to do it.” [3:163] At the later stage, the appointment of the Residents expanded into other states as well. In 1896, the state of Pahang and the remaining part of the Negeri Sembilan was included into the British Residency system and together with Selangor, Perak and Sungei Ujong they formed the Federated Malay States under the central administration of the British Empire.

Powerful Residents and the Local rulers.

After the establishment of the Residents, in 1874, in the States of Selangor, Perak and Sungei Ujong, the real control over the states started to move towards the Residents, after a few years of struggles by them to enforce their authority on the local leaders. From the British ruling side, as Rubin writes there were two ways to take over the control. “To ensure the compliance of the Malay Rulers with the British wishes there were two possibilities ... first, military force and second was to manipulate the facts to fit an acceptable legal framework that would justify British authority as a matter of right, not might.” [7:74] A good example of how the British Residents established their control over states under their residency determined with the actions of the Resident of Perak Hugh Low, who became Resident in 1877. Prior to coming to Perak, Hugh Low was a Governor of Labuan for 24 years. During his service, he travelled a lot in Borneo, made many expeditions as his interests were ranging from botany, the study of the local languages, customs and economy. Sadka observes that “Low came to Perak after he spent a lifetime among Malays, knowing their language and customs and something of the problem of adapting European administration to their needs and prejudices.” [9: 108] Low had his ruling experience in Borneo, where James Brookes was ruling, he learned Brooke’s style of dealing with the locals. Sadka writes about Brookes following

...“Sarawak under Brookes was known throughout Malaysia as a government which identified itself with existing Malay authorities, enlisted them in the administration, deferred to their opinion, and introduced changes at a pace acceptable to them.” [9:108] Low was a friend of Brookes and worked under him. For the European rulers, Low’s approach to Malays was impressive; no matter what the designation of the person was, he was either the Sultan himself or small district chief, he dealt with each of them, in a respected manner and gained their trust easily. Kennedy indicates that “He worked on the principle that when dealing with members of another race, one should be at least as considerate as to members of one’s own race, and infinitely more patient.” [3:179] From all over the state, district chiefs and village *penghulus* came to him to seek his advice pertaining to the settlement of this or that issue that arose in their district. Low left everyone with satisfying decisions and gave them confidence that they came to him again. Sadka gives an example of the Low’s approach towards the locals’ issues, saying, “He reassured them, dealt with their difficulties, lent them money – everyone tugs at the Resident for this scarce article - and took the opportunity to accustom them to proposals for the land rent and poll tax.” [9:110] Low was successful in assuring the participation of the district chiefs and rajas in the rule of the state, however, he made sure that these people knew their place and felt a responsibility towards their position. In this way, he kept them involved somehow in the affairs of the state but at the same time, keeping them away from the executive positions. Under Low, many chiefs became government tax collectors; their income was based on the fixed amount of salaries from the collected amount of taxes. Low and Swettenham enforced the law where they appointed the *penghulus* of the *mukims* to keep order in the districts, instead of costlier police forces. Many Selangor and Perak third rank rajas were appointments as *penghulu*. This was one of the marked successes in the intentions of the Residents. Due to the diminishing role of the former district chiefs, the administrative matters pertaining to tax revenues and judicial rule came into the hands of the European District officers.

The state Council was the most important body during the Residents time. As Kennedy writes, “All important acts of State stemmed from the Council. It dealt with the annual estimates of revenue and expenditure; the appointments and salaries and pensions of all Malay chiefs and headmen; the confirmation or modification of death sentences passed in the Courts.” [3:180] The legislative body of the State, which was the State Council, was incorporated into the administration system of the new rule, dedicated to administering the state as a whole. It consisted of the chiefs, Chinese captains, Sultan and the Resident, the last being the main person in charge of the final decisions factually. The Resident was the person, who nominated the members and determined the agenda of the meeting as well as influenced its decisions. Describing the power of the Residents Sadka writes, “Despite the inadequate constitutional basis for their authority, the Residents by 1880 had become the effective rulers in states; in the years followed, their association with Malays developed smoothly on established principles, and the success of the Perak and Selangor administrations was reflected in phenomenal increases in revenues and populations.” [9:114] These developments ensured legally that the British Empire settled down in this region as an Imperial power and enjoyed the benefits of rich local natural resources for a long period.

Forming the Local Administration. In order to form an effective and successful administration, the Colonial Office allocated salaries and pensions only to the Residents as well as the Assistant Residents of Perak and Selangor, approved by the State Secretary with the recommendation of the Governor. The Governor himself without the involvement of the State Secretariat made other subordinate appointments as these subordinates are considered to be representatives of the Ruler. However, the Residents’ and the Assistant Residents’ status regarding the sources of their salaries and pension were not finalized and became ambiguous. Sadka explains that “The Colonial Office had tried, in effect, to smuggle the Malay states’ officers onto establishment of a colony which was not their employer in any sense, and when driven to define the actual status of the Residents, it had avoided

committing itself and passed them back to the Malay states' governments." [9:127] The fact that an appointment of the Residents such as Maxwell, Low and Swettenham assigned by the Colonial Office and considering their status as servants of the Crown, nevertheless, pensions and salaries had to be taken from the Malay states' revenues. Eventually, As Sadka writes, "The obscurity surrounding the legal status of the Residents did not, however, affect administrative practice; the Colonial Office continued to make the final decision on their appointments and salaries, and when they retired, their pensions were paid through the Crown Agents on behalf of the states, after being approved by the Governor and the Secretary State." [9:132] Relations between Residents and the Colonial Office characterized the future for the success of the Malay campaign. The Colonial Office was closely interested in the matters occurring in the states where the Residents administered. They received updates through the annual reports from the state authorities. Through the reports The Secretary of the State made decisions to emphasize on the development of the required field, for instance, Sadka writes, "they made one important policy recommendation, which he repeated year by year; it was that agriculture be developed, as a balance to mining, by the introduction of Chinese and Indian peasant families." [9:132] "The colonial administration provided itself with a unique base for the future influence over the direction of the colony's economy, with the source of the revenue in land rents and premium, and power over Malay rakyat by controlling their access to their means of production – land." [6:52] As regards to judicial matters, the miscellaneous sources served as a source of information to the Colonial Office. Issue of slavery attracted the attention of the Residents. In Selangor and Sungei Ujong, the value of slave labour was set against the original debt and thereby it was liquidated. Another example, where in Perak the existence of the death penalty for those who organized secret societies. Later on, after the Secretary of State considered this penalty too severe, the Governor requested The Resident regarding penalty and it should not be imposed except in the case involved murder. Sadka

explains that "The Secretary of State also objected to the continuance of licensed public gambling in the Malay states. After it had been made illegal in the Straits and Hong Kong; but here the idea of abolition aroused overwhelming opposition among the local officials." [9:132] Illegal gambling was rampant among the Chinese population. This increased the crime levels until gambling was abolished in 1912.

The Residents and Governors always strived to improve the local infrastructures, simultaneously increasing the revenues for the British Empire. However, they were not always in mutual understanding with London. The Colonial Office was more likely to limit the actions of the local authorities, as they were conscious that without proper control they might lose control over the Residents. On some occasions, Sadka gave an example, thus: "On most of the questions of construction the Colonial Office and the local authorities were not in serious disagreement; both thought in terms of a Pan-Malayan system of railway communications, and both accepted uniformity of construction as a desirable principle. The colonial office, however, always influenced the local authorities from pledging the states to lavish railway concessions." [9:131] The Colonial Office set goals in order to achieve British Empire interests, whereby, the Residents sometimes, due to the power they had, were subject to temptations of making a business for private profits. For instance, Sadka states,

In Sungei Ujong, where profits were speculative, a concession with a guarantee of interest was granted to a private company to make and run the line. Weld the Resident of Sungei Ujong at that time had forgotten the Secretary of State's instructions that he should be consulted before the states were committed to large public works and sanctioned the concession without reference home. The first intimation to the Colonial Office was the dispatch of the completed agreement. The Colonial Office objected to the agreement as unfavourable to the state, cancelled it, and negotiated a new one giving the state much better terms. [9:131]

From this example, it is vivid that State interests were the first priority and were in favourable terms

than any other private interests, even if it was the Residents who attempted to extract benefits for them. In the end, the Colonial Office intervened, that no one should introduce new regulations rather keep control over the local authorities.

One of the most successful achievements that local authorities and The Colonial Office gained was the construction of the railway lines in 1885, operating from Taiping to Sa-Petang on the Larut River. Establishment of this communication served as a means of transportation for the tin trade. By 1886, the Kuala Lumpur line ran to Bukit Kuda on the north bank of the Klang River and it was expanded later to Klang and to Port Swettenham. The Residents tried to improve the infrastructure of the cities via building new drainage lines, improving street roads as well as establishing some kind of medical services. In the beginning, the Residents had to be everywhere in order to identify what needs to be done. The Residents were initially supposed to advice on state matters to the Sultan, however, they in practice ended up administering all matters. However, the Sultan, in the eyes of the local population retained his power and had an important role as the President of the State Council. The first Residents in Perak and Selangor served as an experiment and it became successful for the British Empire as these Residents experienced many failures and successes, which were very essential for the other Residents to learn in order to establish their rule and expand to the other states.

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