



Tun Sri Lanang (1565-1659) and His Contributions in Aceh

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Abstract: Many authors have written about Tun Sri Lanang as a Prime Minister during the old Johor Sultanate and his monumental book, *Sulalah al-Salatin*. However, people lack informations about Tun Sri Lanang's contribution during his life in Aceh. Thus, this study aims to identify Tun Seri Lanang's contribution to the Acehnese at that time. In this study, the researchers used a qualitative method. Data is analyzed using content analysis methods from interviews and sources from books, documents and journals. The finding shows that Tun Seri Lanang contributed greatly as a community leader, scholar, writer, advisor to the sultan/ sultanah of Aceh and left honorable offsprings. The researchers hope that this study can further enrich the literature about traditional Malay muslim figures especially in the 17th century. Furthermore, the documentation of the old hero and local wisdom should be intensify as a reference for the future generations.

Keywords: Tun Sri Lanang, Sulalah al-Salatin, Aceh, Johor Sultanate, literature

1. Introduction

Tun Sri Lanang (1565-1659) was a famous figure among Malay scholars. He was born in Bukit Seluyut, Batu Sawar, Johor in 1565 during the reign of Sultan Muzaffar Shah (1564-1570), who was the third sultan of Johor. Tun Sri Lanang was the son of Tun Ahmad Temenggung Johor with his wife, Tun Ganggang. Tun Ahmad is the son of Bendahara Seri Maharaja Tun Isap Misai and the grandson of the Bendahara Seri Maharaja Tun Mutahir. He was also a great-grandson to Tun Kudu who was the former wife of Sultan Mansur Shah Melaka. According to Suzana Hj. Othman (2008: xi-51) in her book *Tun Sri Lanang: History and Legacy of Traditional Malay Figure*, the original name of Tun Sri Lanang is Tun Muhammad. His title was Bendahara Paduka Raja. He is the descendant of famous Melaka Bendahara such as Tun Perak, Tun Mutahir and Makhdum Syed Abdul Aziz, an ulama from Jeddah. He was twice appointed as Bendahara of Johor Sultanate of during the reigns of Sultan 'Ali Jalla Abdul Jalil Shah II (1570/71-1597) and Sultan 'Alauddin Ri'ayat Shah III (1597-1615).

When Tun Sri Lanang was 48 years old, he was taken to Aceh as a prisoner of Batu Sawar War that occurred between Johor and Aceh in 1613. This war exploded during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda Mahkota Alam (1607-1636). The entire population of Johor, including sultan Alauddin Riayat Shah III, King Abdullah, King Raden, the aristocrat of Johor and Pahang such as King Hussein (Sultan Iskandar Thani) and Princess Kamaliah (Putroe Phang) have been brought to Aceh.

In Aceh, Tun Sri Lanang was then appointed as a community leader named Uleebalang or Hulubalang. He was the first Hulubalang of Samalanga in 1613 to 1659 entitled Orang Kaya Dato' Bendahara Seri Paduka Tun Seberang. Subsequently, Tun Sri Lanang became an adviser to three sultans of Aceh; Sultan Iskandar Muda Mahkota Alam (1607-1636), Sultan Iskandar Thani (1636-1641) and Sultanah Tajul Alam Safiatuddin Shah (1641-1675). He became a

community leader, ulama and scholar with the title Ampon Cik/ Syiek of Samalanga and died there in 1659 (Suzana Hj. Othman 2008: 50).

2. Literature Review

Pocut Haslinda Syahrul Azwar (2011) in her book, *Tun Seri Lanang in the History of Two Nations Indonesia-Malaysia Revealed After 380 Years* has discussed about the biography of Tun Sri Lanang, relationship between Aceh Sultanate and the other Malay Kingdoms and discussed about the descendants of Tun Seri Lanang in Aceh including her. Many new informations was shared with the public about Tun Sri Lanang and his life.

Meanwhile, Suzana Hj. Othman (2008) in her book entitled *Tun Sri Lanang; History and Legacy of Traditional Malay Figure* wrote about the elegance of this figure. She discussed about his life and his descendants in Malaysia and Indonesia until today. The author of the book is also one of the descendants of Tun Sri Lanang. Furthermore, Amad Bahri Mardi (2008) discussed about Tun Sri Lanang in his article. He wrote about the history of Tun Seri Lanang and his monumental book, *Sulalah al-Salatin*.

As a conclusion, studies about Tun Sri Lanang and his work are widely carried out by scholars but topic about the contributions of Tun Sri Lanang in Aceh is very poorly written. So, the gap can be seen in this aspect. Besides, the work of local writers such as Ali Hasjmy, Muhammad Junus Djamil, Abdul Hadi W.M., Suzana Hj. Othman and others will be refer in this research.

3. Problem Statement

Many journals, articles and seminars have been discussed about the monumental book of Tun Sri Lanang, *Sulalah al-Salatin* and his life in Johor. However, people lacked information about Tun Sri Lanang's contributions to the Malay community especially after he was brought to Aceh. Information about Tun Sri Lanang's life and family in Aceh was also lack. Thus, this research aims to identify the contribution of Tun Sri Lanang in Aceh as an effort to enrich the literature about traditional hero of the Malay Archipelago.

4. Methodology

This subtopic explain about the method of conducting this research, especially process of obtaining data. It includes research design, assessment procedures and data analysis. The data collection technique is based on several documents and interview to obtain informations about the issues that has been discussed. The purpose of the interview was to obtain additional information besides the existing literature sources. The informant of the interview were historians and public figures who knew about the history of Tun Seri Lanang. The data obtained were analyzed using content analysis method. Here are the procedure of the research:

1. Collect qualitative data in the form of history books, documents, journals and interview transcriptions.
2. The work in analyzing data is to arrange themes, make conclusions and make interpretations.

4.1 Research Design

This study is a qualitative research. The data was obtained through several documents and interview. The chosen form of interview is unstructured interview. This type of interview gave an advantage because not all informants understand every questions researcher asked them. So that, structured interview with a set of questions is not required. The instruments used in this study are in the form of unstructured interview. The method of interview can be carried out orally and *face-to-face* to obtain data relevant to the research. There is an advantage when using this method as the data provided by the informant is in-depth and the informant can add information through additional information so that this research does not require a large sample of respondent.

4.3 Research Procedure

All researchers have identified informants who need to be interview and they has been contacted earlier before the interview. The researchers interviewed four historians and scholars and they gave permission to record the interview during the session. Before the interview was carried out, the researchers first declared the objective of the study to the informants. After the interview, the transcription of the interview is made in the form of *Microsoft Word 2013*. Finally, the transcription has been used in order to analyze the content of the text.

4.4 Data Analysis

The data obtained was processed and collected by all researchers. Meeting among researchers are made five times over nearly an hour for every single meeting. The transcribed data is then compiled according to the informant name. The results of the transcribed data are given themes. So based on the main theme, the data obtained from these four informants was finally discussed.

5. Findings and Discussions

From the content analysis and interview methods, the contribution of Tun Seri Lanang in Aceh has been categorized into five themes. These themes are categorized according to their importance and the themes are as follows; (i) Community leader (ii) Islamic scholar or an ulama (iii) Writer (iv) Advisor of sultan /sultanah Aceh (v) Leave good offsprings and descendants.

5.1 Community Leader

After twice becoming a prime minister in the old Johor Sultanate, one of Tun Seri Lanang's main contributions was serving as a community leader in Samalanga, Aceh. In 1615, Sultan Iskandar Muda appointed Tun Seri Lanang as Samalanga's first hulubalang as proposed by Princess Kamaliah. Hulubalang is a leader who leads a region. As a community leader, Tun Seri Lanang has been trying with all his efforts to develop Samalanga and its community according to the decree of Sultan Iskandar Muda. Eventually, Tun Seri Lanang started to develop the economy of the Samalanga community. The first thing that has been done by Tun Seri Lanang is to develop the agricultural sector. Through agriculture, farming, fishing and self-sustaining economy, the people can feed their family and live a prosperous life. Tun Seri Lanang is also a pioneer in boat building. Boat is used as a medium of transportation at the sea and river. Many Samalanga community become a fishermen and farmer. The farming and fishing activity was inherited by this community until now. Boat was also used during war as it became a defense unit to prevent Portuguese and Dutch colonizer from entering Samalanga. As a result, Samalanga become a strong fortress of muslim community especially during the Aceh War. (Pocut Haslinda Syahrul Azwar 2012).

5.2 Islamic Scholar

In Aceh, a pious scholar such as Tun Sri Lanang played a very significant role to build a religious community. His vertical relation to Allah is the secret of his success. Tun Seri Lanang was known as an Islamic religious figure who is knowledgeable especially about al-Quran and Hadith. He was also known as a person who loved knowledge and has been closed to Qadi Malikul Adil of Aceh at that time such as Nuruddin al-Raniri. They often talk about Islamic science and both of them teach the tenets of Islam in Samalanga. Tun Seri Lanang also made learning and teaching al-Quran as an activities everyday in every village. In addition, Tun Seri Lanang also established many dayahs (for example Dayah Kuta Blang) and mosques (Kuta Blang Mosque) by donating land for the sake of Islam. This practice had a positive impact because Samalanga eventually create many muslim scholars and became the center of Islam, especially in East Aceh (Pocut Haslinda Syahrul Azwar 2012).

5.3 Writer

Sulalah al-Salatin or *Malay History/ The Malay Annals* is written by Tun Sri Lanang. It is well-known throughout the world and has been used as a source to find out the history, culture and values of traditional Malay community. According to Muhammad Yusoff Hashim (1998:78), Tun Sri Lanang has started to write *Sulalah al-Salatin* in Johor on 13 May 1612 and was completed in Samalanga, Aceh in 1617. In the introduction of *Sulalah al-Salatin* H.S. 631 KITLV Library, Leiden University stated that *Sulalah al-Salatin* has been written by Tun Muhammad or his nick name was Tun Sri Lanang. *Sulalah al-Salatin* in this case reveals:

Tun Muhammad namanya, Tun Sri Lanang timang-timangannya, Paduka Raja gelarannya, Bendahara, anak Orang Kaya Paduka Raja, cucu Bendahara Seri Maharaja... (A. Samad Ahmad 2010:xxvi)

According to V.I. Braginsky (1994:173), Tun Sri Lanang is a talented and knowledgeable author about Malay history. *Sulalah al-Salatin* is his best contribution to this generation. His style of composing the book was simple, clear and precise. He tried to express his thoughts about the various events through selected stories and he was written so convincingly that the reader seemed to see a picture. Muhammad Haji Salleh (2012) once praised Tun Sri Lanang and said the author is a genius. He was sublimely presenting *Sulalah al-Salatin* to its readers. As a Prime Minister, Tun Sri Lanang had worked in the sultan's palace and his experience contributed a lot in order to produce the book. Only authors who have knowledge about history, customs and government can produce such a book.

5.4 Advisor of Sultan or Sultanah Aceh

In the history of Aceh Sultanate, Tun Seri Lanang was appointed as an advisor to Sultan Iskandar Muda, Sultan Iskandar Thani and Sultanah Tajul Alam Safiatuddin Shah. Tun Seri Lanang was also entrusted as a palace writer. For example is the letter of Sultan Iskandar Muda to King James I of Britain which is known as a letter of gold. This letter is written in refined language by Tun Seri Lanang in 1615. It was a reply to King James I who asked Sultan Iskandar Muda for permission to trade in the Tiku and Pariaman areas. It is now kept in the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford in the United Kingdom (Adli Abdullah 2011:5). During the reign of Sultan Iskandar Thani, Tun Seri Lanang

was entrusted as a Prime Minister (Orang Kaya Maharaja Lela). He held this post until 1644. He was renowned as brave statesman to make decisions. During Sultanah Safiatuddin reign, she gave the City Commander post to him. Tun Seri Lanang's contribution to the Aceh Sultanate cannot easily be denied.

5.5 Leave Good Offsprings and Descendants

According to the 8th generation of Tun Sri Lanang in Aceh, Pocut Haslinda Syahrul Azwar (2012:2), Tun Sri Lanang once married in Johor to Tun Aminah binti Tun Kadut bin Seri Amar Bangsa Tun Ping bin Tun Hasan bin Tun Biajid Rupert bin Bendahara Seri Maharaja. From this marriage he had four children; Tun Anum, Tun Mat Ali, Tun Jenal and Tun Gembuk. Tun Seri Lanang's first son, Tun Anum, was appointed as a Prime Minister of Johor and died in 1642. After Tun Anum passed away, his younger brother Tun Jenal was appointed as a Prime Minister. Tun Jenal (Bendahara Paduka Raja or Datuk Sekudai) had a daughter who married to Syed Zainal Abidin from Aceh and had a son named Dato Maharaja Diraja. Dato Maharaja Diraja had two children named Syed Ja'far and Habib Abdullah. The descendants of Tun Seri Lanang later became respected family in Johor, Pahang, Trengganu, and Selangor.

In Aceh, Tun Sri Lanang married with Panglima Nyak Doom Hulubalang Raja in Meuraksa daughter. His descendants become scholars, local leaders (Hulubalang in Samalanga) and fighters especially in Aceh War against Dutch. Among his famous descendants is Major General Hamzah Bendahara, whose name is familiar to the people of Aceh, especially Samalanga. Teuku Hamzah Bendahara is one of the descendants of Tun Seri Lanang who was once appointed as the commander of the Kodam I Iskandar Muda Military Regional Command. The descendants of Tun Seri Lanang became fighters against the Dutch in Aceh. Among them was Pocut Meuligoe binti Teuku Chik Muda Hasan. Pocut Meuligoe fought against the Dutch in Aceh and she was the 4th descendant of Tun Seri Lanang. In addition, the descendants of Tun Seri Lanang in Aceh are through Tun Rembau which has the title Seri Paduka Tuan (Teuku Tjik Dibrang Panglima Perkasa). The descendants of Tun Seri Lanang through Tun Rembau in Samalanga are known by the name of Ampoen Chik Samalanga. The descendants of Tun Seri Lanang lived in Samalanga, Bambi, Seulimum, Meuraksa, Pidie, Perlak, Peukan Bada and other places (Zulkifli 2010).

6. Conclusion

This study found that Tun Seri Lanang has contributed greatly as a community leader, scholar, writer, advisor to the sultan/ sultanah Aceh and passed down a good offspring. Tun Seri Lanang died in 1659 AD in Samalanga and was buried in Kampong Meunasah Lueng, Kutablang, Samalanga, Aceh. He lived for 94 years; 48 years in Johor and 46 years in Aceh. His siwah or keris and hats (peci) are still kept by his descendant. In addition, Tun Sri Lanang has also left his monumental book *Sulalah al-Salatin* to our generations and future generations. The book will still be read, studied and discussed even though it is over 400 years old (1617-2022). This is indeed Tun Sri Lanang's biggest contribution.

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