

The Moral Thought of the Malays: Feudalism & the Concept of Corruption Based on Selected Malay Texts

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Abstract

The establishment of the Malay Sultanate before colonialism has marked the construction of Malays' moral thought through its feudalism system. During this period, the ideas of moral values were primarily constructed by the Malay ruler known as the *raja* or *sultan* who had the highest position in the feudalism system. Therefore, the king's practices often became the practice and culture of the common people. As the moral thought was perceived in a form of top-down approach, the construction of the concept of "corruption" also mainly relies upon the king's values. Absolute power does indeed causes absolute corruption as the king tend to confine the concept of corruption to a few malpractice acts that were considered to be against his power and authority. These malpractice acts include treachery and breach of trust which are punished by death penalty. The common people tend to become more adaptive with the rules, thus unable to question the deviation made by the king. Thus, this article aims to investigate the understanding of the concept of corruption and how feudalism has shaped the conceptualization of moral thought during the classical age in the Malay society. Is it true that the comprehensive ideas of "corruption" was merely a western adoption without any foundation in the Malay tradition? This research is based on selected Malay manuscripts including *Taj al-Salatin* and *Sulalatus Salatin* (The Malay Annals).

Keywords: Feudalism, moral thought, corruption, ruler, crime, Malay manuscripts.

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Introduction

Corruption, as it has been understood in the modern era is the composition of three main components which are bribery, extortion and nepotism.¹ Robert C. Brooks defined the concept of corruption as “the intentional misperformance or neglect of a recognized duty, or the unwarranted exercise of power, with the motives of gaining some advantage more or less directly personal.”² A more comprehensive and compelling analysis of corruption had been discussed by Syed Hussein Alatas as he categorized the characteristics of corruption and differentiated between corruption with other types of criminal behavior, maladministration and mismanagement of affairs.³ However, this definition does not completely reflect the case in the pre-colonial Malay society as they have a different set of moral thought which was based on the feudal system.

A comprehensive law on corruption was first introduced by the British government as part of their response to the rampant bribery and other forms of corruption in Malaya starting from 1871 throughout the enforcement of Penal Code in the Straits Settlements. The formation of the corruption law during this period had raised the perceptions amongst the British officials that there was no law on corruption before the colonialism era and the Malays had no comprehensive ideas/concept of corruption. As a result of the failure to scrutinize the moral thought of the Malays through the Malay classical works, it has eventually become the source of reductionism towards the Malay scholarship. In a similar vein, Farish Noor propounded, “Western Orientalist scholars were keen to diminish the value of Malay-Muslim scholarship and reduce important works of philosophy as mere fairy tales and fables”.⁴

The moral or ethical thought had a greater place in the Malay tradition as well as other disciplines and genres. The *ulama*’ or Muslim scholars such as Bukhari al-Jauhari had worked seriously in defying the feudalistic system in his masterpiece “*Taj al-Salatin*”. A very special emphasize was highlighted in order to instil the importance of good governance and the harms that the state may get from corruption. The double-

¹ This include the auto-corruption as propounded by Robert C. Brooks which means a type of bribe that does not involve others and there is only one perpetrator. This type of bribe is often associated with someone who has a certain advantage over others, including having a certain influence or position that allows him to benefit early when a law comes into force. See Robert C. Brooks. (1910). *Corruption in American Politics and Life*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, p. 45 and Robert C. Brooks. (1909). “The Nature of Political Corruption”, *Political Science Quarterly*, 24 (1), p. 4.

² Ibid, p. 41-54.

³ For an act to be classified as corruption it has to contain these characteristics, “(a) a betrayal of trust; (b) deception of a public body, private institution or society at large; (c) deliberate subordination of common interests to specific interests; secrecy of execution except in situations which allow powerful individuals or those under their protection to dispense with it; (e) involvement of more than one person or party; (f) the presence of mutual obligations and benefits, in pecuniary or other forms; (g) the focussing of action on those who want definite decisions and those who can influence them; (h) the attempt to camouflage the corrupt act by some form of lawful justification; and (i) the expression of a contradictory dual function by those committing the act. See Syed Hussein Alatas. (1991). *Corruption: Its Nature, Causes and Functions*. Kuala Lumpur: S. Abdul Majeed and Co., p. 1-2. See also Syed Hussein Alatas. (1999). *Corruption and the Destiny of Asia*. Selangor: Prentice Hall (M) Sdn. Bhd. and Simon & Schuster (Asia) Pte. Ltd, p. 7-8; Syed Hussein Alatas. (1986). *The Problem of Corruption*. Singapura: Times Books International, p. 10-11.

⁴ Farish Noor. (2009, February 10). ‘Blind Loyalty?’ *The Nut Graph*. Retrieved January 4, 2019, from <http://www.thenutgraph.com/blind-loyalty>.

edged approaches taken by the Muslim scholars, which were “*targhib*” and “*tarhib*” in educating the *rajas* and his officials were regarded as the most fundamental strategies to construct a stable society. *Taj al-Salatin* for example, was used as a handbook of administration by many *rajas* including in the case of Raja Singapura, Sultan Jogja and Solo as well as in the appointment of the queen of Sultan Iskandar Thani as a *Sultanah* of Aceh.⁵

It can be firmly stated that the understanding of good governance and the negative impact of corruption had long existed and emphasized prior to the modern era in the Malay society. Nevertheless, through the practice of feudalism and many concepts of absolute allegiance that was constructed by *rajas*, offences with regards of corruption were less concerned and classified as a petty offence and forgivable. Therefore, this article aims to scrutinize the notion of feudalism and anti-feudalism particularly in the case of corruption based on two classical Malay texts namely *Sulalatus Salatin* and *Taj al-Salatin*. However, the discussion about feudalistic system will only be limited within the form of the relationship between the king and the peasant people and how it influenced the formation of moral values of the Malay society as a whole in the past.

Feudalism and the Moral Thought of the Malays

Although some elements of corruption was already understood by the Malays before the colonialism, however, in terms of the actual practice itself, they were far behind and overly attached with the feudal system that reserved a very significant respect to the elite traditional leaders. An event that particularly displayed elements of feudalism was when Tengku Panglima Raja, a brother-in-law and also the cousin of Sultan Abdul Samad was caught by a British officer for bribing a magistrate officer, Newbrouner with a total of \$40 to settle his case in the court and support his side. A stern decision was made by W. B. Douglas, the British resident in Selangor, as he suspended Panglima Raja from his position as a member of Selangor State Council (*Majlis Mesyuarat Negeri Selangor*).⁶ This decision, however, had been questioned by Sir William C. F. Robinson, the governor of Strait Settlement as he argued that the decision made by Douglas was beyond the jurisdiction of British resident.⁷ Therefore, Panglima Raja had been released from the offence and resumed his earlier position. Most importantly, Robinson made a remark that bribery in the Malay culture was not considered as a serious offence and forgivable.⁸

This paradox has caused an enigma pertaining the moral thought of the Malays. Why the Malays in certain circumstances seems to be against their own moral principle although the bad impact of corruption had been clearly highlighted in many Malay-Muslim classical works? This phenomenon was mainly influenced by the Malay political culture especially with regards of the psychology of the feudalism system.

⁵ Bukhari al-Jauhari. (1992). *Taj Us-Salatin*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka, p. xxiii.

⁶ SSF/Resident 115/78, Reports Arrest by Mr. Newbrouner at Bernam of Tunku Panglima Raja the Penghulu of Kanchong for attempting to bribe him in a civil case. See also Zulkanain Abdul Rahman, Ahmad Kamal Ariffin Mohd Rus and Noor Ain Mat Noor. (2017). *Sejarah Perjuangan SPRM: Satu Perjalanan*. Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Universiti Malaya, p. 24.

⁷ SSF/CS 134/78, Conveys the Governor's Disapproval of the Proceedings Against the Tunku Panglima Raja.

⁸ Emily Sadka. (1968). *The Protected Malay State, 1874-1895*. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, p. 182.

The Malay political culture gave so much effects to the construction and internalization of the Malays' moral thought since the spreading and acceptance of Islam in Southeast Asia took place in a gradual process, and not in immediate effect.

As Syed Hussein Alatas put it, feudalism is a political and legal system ever practiced by the Malays at least since the time of the Sultanate of Malacca. Alatas thoroughly explained the traits or characteristics of the feudal system as he elucidates eight main traits including:

“(a) The presence of a big gulf between the poor (usually peasants) and the rich (usually noblemen and chiefs), in the economic, social, political and judicial fields (b) the political order was dominated by hereditary groups having at their disposals large estates (c) the prevalence of the manorial system of economy wherein a large, self-sufficient estate was cultivated by the peasants for the master, often a royal personage who rewarded them with strips of land, the fruits of which were in the main part retainable (d) at the head of the manorial hierarchy was the feudal lord, immune from the supervision of higher authorities, yet possessing judicial, economic, fiscal and administrative rights (e) the relation between the lord and his dependants was one of enfeoffment, the lord having the right to the unpaid labour and services of his dependants (f) grants of land for cultivation were not to be withdrawn at will by the lord (g) the warrior class dominated the feudal order and (h) the feudal order lacked functional division and favoured decentralization of power and administration.”⁹

Based on the feudalistic society as mentioned above, the feudal lord was usually immune from any offence and have many privileges while the common people were subject to strict punishments and regulations. Furthermore, not only the elite leaders managed to gain law immunity, they also constructed the values, cultural and belief system amongst the masses that may support their superiority and supremacy by indoctrinating “sacred” myths, ideas and concepts. One of the oldest examples to illustrate this was through the agreement between Sri Tri Buana and Demang Lebar Daun which was infamously known as full allegiance of *rakyat* (masses) to the *raja* (king).¹⁰ Through this ancient covenant (*waad*) as recorded in the Malay Annals, rakyat had to fully recognize and acknowledge the superiority of the *raja* and should never commit any disloyal acts or any means of *derhaka* to the *raja* that may breach the *waad*.

Another sacred idea or concept introduced in order to bring the supremacy of the *raja* was through the custom of “*pantang Melayu menderhaka*” and the concept of *daulat raja*. Hugh Clifford in his book, “*The Further Side of Silence*” propounded the dominance of elite leaders over the masses as follows, “The rule of their *rajahs* and chiefs was one of the most absolute and cynical autocracies that the mind of man has conceived; and the people living under it were mercilessly exploited, and possessed no rights either of person or of property.”¹¹ A parallel observation had also been made by Sir Frank Swettenham as he described:

⁹ Syed Hussein Alatas. (1972). “Feudalism in Malaysia Society: A Study in Historical Continuity” in Syed Hussein Alatas (Ed.), *Modernization and Social Change*. London/Sydney: Angus and Robertson.

¹⁰ Richard O. Winstedt. (1938). *The Malay Annals (Sejarah Melayu)*. Singapore: Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, p. 134.

¹¹ Hugh Clifford. (1922). *The Further Side of Silence*. New York: Doubleday, p. xi.

“They will do the behest of a *raja* or a chief because that also is part of the tradition of loyalty, the injunction of the men of old time; the responsibility is his, but they are willing to obey him blindly, expecting that he will support them in the day of trouble, and prepared to suffer if that be necessary. To do otherwise would be *drahka*, treason, and the punishment for that crime is death and disgrace... They never thought whether anything was right or wrong, advantageous to them personally or otherwise; it was simply, ‘what is the *raja*’s order?’”¹²

The construction of the moral thought of the Malays were deeply inherited from the *raja* traditions. According to Anthony Milner, “the *raja* is not only the ‘key institution’ but the only institution, and the role he plays in the lives of his subjects is as much moral and religious as political”.¹³ The allegiance of the Malays to the *rajas* were absolute with an exception to certain cases. Nevertheless, this principle was nothing to do with fear or anxiety of being sentenced by the *rajas*, but due to the custom that they hold steadfast, “it is the custom of the Malays never to *derhaka* (*adat Melayu tiada pernah derhaka*)”.¹⁴ A similar event was also captured through the explanation of Beraim Bapa when his father, Sultan of Pasai intended to kill him. He firmly said that he will not commit treason (*derhaka*) and further explained, “If I wished to *derhaka* in Pasai, Pasai would be mine; if I wished to *derhaka* in Siam, Siam would be mine; if in China, China would be mine; if in Java, Java would be mine; if in India (*Kling*), India would be mine”.¹⁵

The Malays, on the other hand, keep steadfast to the principle that they will never except *raja muda* that has clearly shown his cruelty and excessiveness as a supreme ruler or *sultan* as depicted in *Sulalatus Salatin* when Bendahara Paduka Raja made a declaration, “...*Hamba Melayu tiada pernah derhaka. Tetapi akan anak raja seorang ini, janganlah kita pertuan*”.¹⁶ In addition, Hugh Clifford in his report on the Malays in Terengganu mentioned that Malays in Terengganu did not show a reckless or haphazard allegiance and obedience to the unjust government like the Malays in other states.¹⁷ Through the practice of feudalism and system of belief that had been constructed by *rajas*, offences with regards of corruption were less concerned and classified as a petty offence and forgivable.

¹² Frank Swettenham. (1907). *British Malaya: An Account of the Origin and Progress of British Influence in Malaya*. London: J. Lane, p. 141. On other note, Clifford explained, “*Raja was, of course, the paramount authority, and all power emanated from him*”. See Hugh Clifford. (1903). *In Court and Kampung: Being Tales and Sketches of Native Life in the Malay Peninsula*. London: Grant Richards, p. 4.

¹³ Anthony Milner. (2016). *Kerajaan: Malay Political Culture on the Eve of Colonial Rule* (Second Edition). Petaling Jaya: Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, p. 168.

¹⁴ This is an excerpt from the followers of bendahara of Melaka when Sultan Mahmud ordered his officials to kill bendahara. See Windstedt, “*Sejarah Melayu*”, p. 187.

¹⁵ A. H. Hill (Trans). (1960). ‘The Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai: A Revised Romanized Version of Raffles MS 67, together with an English translation’. *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 33 (2), p. 86.

¹⁶ The declaration was made as a protest towards Raja Muhammad’s brutal manner after he killed Tun Besar just because of a small mistake. A. Samad Ahmad. (1984). *Sulalatus Salatin (Sejarah Melayu)*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, p. 152-153.

¹⁷ Hugh Clifford. (1938). *Expedition: Terengganu dan Kelantan*. Kuala Lumpur: Federated Malay States Government Press, p. 114-115.

The Notion and Concept of Corruption in Malay Worldview

Terms to refer to the concepts of corruption were already established amongst the Malay society before the advent of colonialism. Some of the Malay vocabularies that describe such offence include “*menyorong*”, “*menyuap*” and “*menyogok*”. Those terms specifically elucidate an act of bribery. Nevertheless, the Malays did not comprehensively internalize the meaning of “corruption” that may be equivalent to the modern society due to the very different nature, environment, socio-political milieu and more particularly set of moral values. For example, the concept of corruption was limited to a few elements rather than the comprehensive meaning as mentioned earlier by Syed Hussein Alatas. To scrutinize further on this aspect, two classical Malay texts had been selected and analyzed, namely *Sulalatus Salatin* and *Taj al-Salatin*. Both texts portrayed different perspective of the Malay moral thought whereby the first text exhibits the feudalism values while the latter propounded the anti-feudalism perspective.

Sulalatus Salatin

Sulalatus Salatin (*Sejarah Melayu*) or the Malay Annals is known as one of the oldest Malay manuscripts and was nominated as part of the Memory of the World in 2001¹⁸ and regarded as an important scripture to portray the wisdom of Malay moral thought and feudalism. The Malay Annals is a manuscript that provides a historical account of the Malay Sultanate in the fifteenth and early sixteenth century. Many aspects had been highlighted in the manuscript including the major themes of the Malay empire before the establishment of Malacca Sultanate until the end of the empire which ranged from its politics, trading and cultures. The actual author of this text is still in dispute. Historians, however, assumed that Tun Seri Lanang to be either responsible as the author or compiler. Despite the endless and incessant contestation amongst the historians with regards of the exact classification of the manuscript due to the myths and legendary added by the author, this dispute could never erase the importance of the Malay Annals to describe the Malay thought particularly with regards to feudalism.

One of the important incidents related to the corruption that had been recorded in the *Sulalatus Salatin* was the act of bribery by Nina Sudar Dewana when he tried to influence Bendahara Seri Maharaja to prioritize him over Raja Mendaliar for personal interest. Nina Sudar Dewana then took an approach to visit Bendahara at night while bringing a large amount of gold to bribe him. The excerpts from *Sulalatus Salatin* are as follows:

*“Maka Nina Sudar Dewana fikir pada hatinya, ‘Ada pun bahawa Raja Mendaliar ini orang kaya, kalau ia menyorong pada Bendahara, nescaya alah aku. Jikalau demikian, baik aku pada malam ini pergi pada Bendahara Seri Maharaja’. Setelah demikian fikirnya, hari pun malam, maka oleh Nina Sudar Dewana, diambilnya emas sebahara dibawanya ke rumah Bendahara Seri Maharaja.”*¹⁹

¹⁸ Retrieved January 4, 2019, from <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/memory-of-the-world/register/full-list-of-registered-heritage/registered-heritage-page-8/sejarah-melayu-the-malay-annals/>.

¹⁹ *Sejarah Melayu (The Malay Annals): MS Raffles No. 18 (Versi Raja Bongsu)*. (1998). Kuala Lumpur: The Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, p. 259. See also Zulkanain Abdul

The second episode of bribery happened between Raja Mendaliar and Laksamana Khoja Hassan after Kitul, the one who had a debt problem with Raja Mendaliar, found out about the bribe of Nina Sudar Dewana towards Bendahara. Kitul then met Raja Mendaliar to inform him about the bribe by exaggerating the story that both, Bendahara and Nina Sudar Dewana were planning to kill him as well. As a response to the news from Kitul, Raja Mendaliar then took an immediate action to meet Laksamana Khoja Husain, a very close confidant of Sultan Mahmud Syah.

“Demi Raja Mendaliar mendengar kata Kitul itu, maka Raja Mendaliar mengambil surat utang Kitul, dicarik-cariknya. Maka kata Raja Mendaliar kepada Kitul, ‘Adapun utang tuan hamba sekati itu, halallah dunia akhirat. Tuan hambalah saudara hamba!’ Maka kembalilah ke rumahnya. Pada malam itu juga, diambil Raja Mendaliar emas sebahara dan permata indah-indah dan pakaian yang baik-baik, dibawanya kepada Laksamana [yang] terlalu karib pada Sultan Mahmud Syah.”

Upon receiving gold from Raja Mendaliar, Laksamana immediately lost his moral integrity and decided to convey the fabricated message by Raja Mendaliar that Bendahara and Nina Sudar Dewana wanted to conduct treason towards Sultan Mahmud Syah.

“Hendaklah orang kaya persembahkan ke bawah Duli Yang Dipertuan, supaya jangan sahaya dikatakan sebicara dengan penghulu sahaya, karena sahaya, telah sahaya ketahuilah bahawa Bendahara Seri Maharaja hendak derhaka, sudah berbuat takhta kerajaan, kasadnya hendak naik Raja di dalam Melaka ini’. Setelah Laksamana melihat harta terlalu banyak, maka hilanglah budi akalunya, sebab disamun oleh harta dunia. Maka kata Laksamana kepada Raja Mendaliar, ‘Hambalah berpersembahkan dia ke bawah Duli Yang Dipertuan’.”²⁰

These act of bribery was eventually brought up to the murders of Bendahara Seri Maharaja, Seri Nara Diraja, Tun Hassan Temenggung and Tun Ali by Tun Sura Diraja and Tun Indera Segara after receiving the order from the *sultan* to kill them. On another occasion, Ali Manu Nayan tried to bribe (*menyorong*) Tun Hassan Temenggung with ten gold *tahil*²¹, but Tun Hassan Temenggung refused to accept it and said that he was not easily “bought” like everyone else.²²

Taj al-Salatin: The Anti-Feudalism Malay Text

Although there was no specific corruption law enacted to convict the offenders like the modern days, however, the Malays did have a manual, handbook of administration, or basic guidelines that was based on Islamic teaching in order to prevent them from any malpractice and maladministration.²³ This could be seen

Rahman, Ahmad Kamal Ariffin Mohd Rus and Noor Ain Mat Noor, *Sejarah Perjuangan SPRM: Satu Perjalanan*, p. 8.

²⁰ *Sejarah Melayu (The Malay Annals): MS Raffles No. 18 (Versi Raja Bongsu)*, p. 260-261.

²¹ A former Chinese monetary unit that also had been used in Far East. One *tahil* is equivalent to 38 grams (1½ oz).

²² *Sejarah Melayu (The Malay Annals)*. Chapter XIII.

²³ The specific punishment and sentence was introduced later through various government laws such as in Kedah during the rule of Sultan Abdul Hamid (1882-1943).

through the reference of scriptures such as *Taj al-Salatin* and *Bustan al-Salatin* that had been written by an authoritative *ulama'* or Islamic scholar as part of the palace orders. These scriptures which falls into *nasihat* (counsel-for-kings) genre brought a very significant benefit towards the process of administration of the *kerajaan*, either in explicit or implicit ways and have become the sources of academic research in various fields including history, literature, sociology, anthropology, economics, politics, ethics and others.

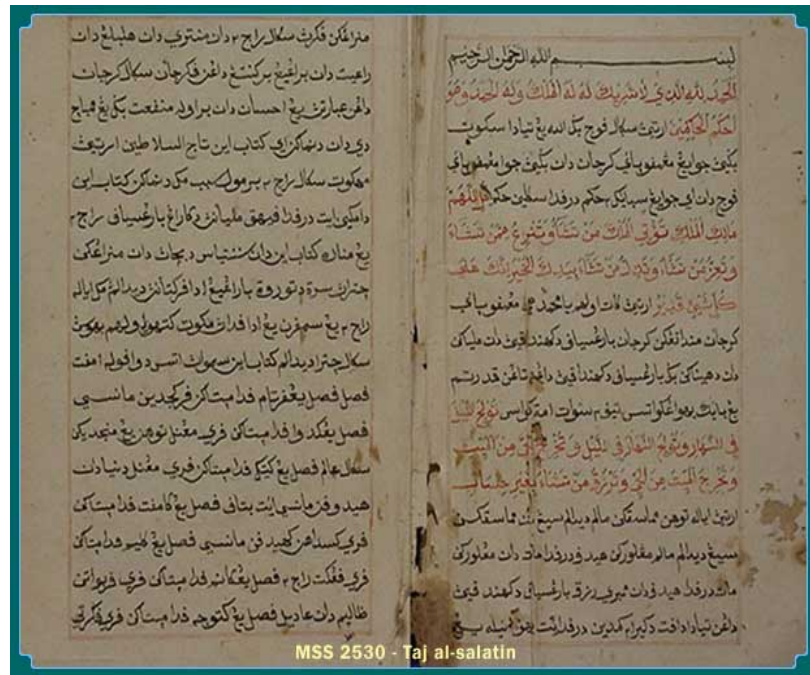


Figure 1: One of the pages in *Taj al-Salatin*

(Source: <http://www.pnm.gov.my/manuskrip/melayu/03koleksi/mss2530besar.htm>)

Taj al-Salatin or also known as the Crown of Kings is classified as a Malay literary classic and served as a traditional guideline to the king and ruler and was specially written to be presented to Sultan ‘Alauddin Ri’ayat Shah Sayyid al-Mukammil. This text was written or translated into Malay circa 1603 in the Sultanate of Aceh, north Sumatra at the midst of chaotic struggle for the royal throne amongst the noble families of Aceh.²⁴ With its distinct Persian-influenced traditions and themes, the manuscript is believed to be written by Bukhari al-Jauhari/Johori. There are at least 28 editions of the *Taj al-Salatin* manuscripts that had been found. From Aceh, the text was copied and spread in many other places including Jakarta, Malaya, Brussels, Leiden, London and Oxford.²⁵

On the contrary, the general representation of the Malay Annals that promotes feudalism as a Malay worldview, the author of *Taj al-Salatin*, however, inclined to highlight the ‘mirrors for princes’ genre from the anti-feudalism perspective.²⁶ The

²⁴ Raden Hoesein Djajadiningrat. (1982/1983). *Kesultanan Aceh: Suatu Pembahasan Tentang Sejarah Kesultanan Aceh Berdasarkan Bahan-Bahan yang Terdapat dalam Karya Melayu*. Indonesia: Jabatan Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, p. 81.

²⁵ Jelani Harun. (2003). *Pemikiran Adab Ketatanegaraan Kesultanan Melayu*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, p. 50.

²⁶ Syed Farid Alatas. (2018). “Anti-Feudal Elements in Classical Malay Political Theory: The *Taj al-Salatin*”. *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 91 (314), p. 29.

main purpose of the writing of *Taj al-Salatin* was also to provide the best guidelines for just kingship and good governance in accordance with the Islamic tradition such as advising kings in the matter of just and proper governance by emphasizing the role of the ruler as the servant of God on earth.²⁷ *Taj al-Salatin* had been used significantly by the kings to make an important decision as well as to find solutions for some administrative problems. As discussed by C. Hooykas, Sultan Hussain Shah also used this scripture to reply the proposal and suggestion made by Stamford Raffles that Sultan Hussain should start to set up a trade business to overcome the pecuniary problem of his *kerajaan*. It was also used to solve the problem of succession of the throne when Sultan Iskandar Thani died in 1641, which led to the appointment of Sultana Taj ul-Alam, who was the first woman who became the sultan in Aceh. The prominent contribution of *Taj al-Salatin* as a handbook of administration was also conspicuous through the reference made by the *Jogya*, *Solo* and *Java*'s sultan for their respective *kerajaan*.

From the structural and arrangement of ideas and point of views, this manuscript had been divided into 24 main chapters (*fasal*) with the first four chapters particularly discussed the metaphysical or theological aspect of human nature including the afterlife in Islamic worldview. As those aspects are very profound in Islamic creed, the author tried to revive the Malays thought especially the *rajas* on the importance of *weltanschauung* of every human being that they have been created for a very significant purpose. These aspects had become the first theme dealt by the author since the correct understanding of this worldview affected the human life in multi-faceted angles. For one who possessed the absolute power like the raja, without a thorough comprehension on this aspect, they will easily fall into the despicable of corruption. Therefore, Jauhari's thoughtful and discern arrangement of the structures that focused on the profound aspect of the Islamic theology in the first place is very instrumental to instill the awareness of self-cognition and cognition of God amongst the rulers including the ministers or viziers. Matters related to the existence of human being and its obligations as a slave of God are indispensable to guide the *rajas* to the right path of ruling and always in the self-awareness of God's severe punishments to those committing corruptions and crimes.

In the second stage of discussion, from chapter five to chapter nine, Jauhari thoroughly elaborated the ideal concept of justice (*keadilan*) and injustice (*ketidakadilan/kezaliman*) that every *raja* has to keep in mind and with honesty and trust, practice all the responsibility to make sure that the real justice could be attained. As corruption was derived from the injustice which refers to 'putting something at a wrong place', Jauhari put a great emphasize on the clarification of all actions or conducts that could be justified as justice and all actions or conducts that could be categorized as injustice or corrupts. These specific categorizations are indispensable especially for the *rajas* who possess an absolute power or authority in the context of Malay feudalism. Moreover, the bold distinction between loyalty to a *raja* and to the supreme ruler, God had been clearly made to show the boundary and limitations of obedience to the *raja*. Notwithstanding, the discussions did not completely address the multi-facet of justice and injustice, however, it managed to provide a sufficient and fundamental understanding of both concepts.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 32.

In the next section of his discussion, Jauhari placed a special elaboration on the obligations of palace officials including the ministers, messengers and courtiers in chapter ten to thirteen. Although they may not have the absolute power like the *rajas* who had absolute rights to punish anyone even the innocent people in certain cases, but in the context of the Malay society, some of the ministers or viziers also possessed a significant authority that may also cause corruptions in the process of becoming intermediate or middle men between the *rajas* and *rakyat*. This could be seen from the stories that will be discussed later. In many cases within the Malay world, the ministers often became more powerful than the *rajas* due to their wealth possessions. This was proven by the case of Ngah Ibrahim in Perak who was found to be wealthier than the sultan and in fact provided financial assistance to the *kerajaan*. The last part of Jauhari's work, in chapter fourteen to twenty four involved a discussion about the good virtues in various aspects including the good upbringing of children, the signs of hunch or intuition, the relationships between Muslims and unbelievers and obligation to fulfill all promises either during good or difficult times.

When Stamford Raffles sent Colonel William Farquhar, the Resident of Malacca together with forty soldiers and sailors to ask a permission from Sultan Abdul Rahman to allow the British government to build the trading port in Singapore, the sultan however gave an outright rejection to the proposal. This decision was made due to his firm abidance to the *nasihat* and guidelines in *Taj al-Salatin* that highlights the responsibility of a *sultan*²⁸. According to the guidelines, a *sultan* should never take advantage of his position to gain benefits from the agreement between the colonial power. The responsibility as a king was explained thoroughly in many clauses/chapters in the *Taj al-Salatin* especially with regards of upholding justice. For example, one of the statements in the sixth clause clearly stated that:

*“...tiada dapat tiada daripada segala raja-raja dan hakim-hakim menghukumkan pada antara mereka itu dengan adil dan insaf dan demikian memelihara faedah kerajaan dan jangan ditaksirkan pada yang patut disiasatkan pekerjaan yang harus dikerjakan itu kerana pada tempat dan ketika yang patut dikasihankan harus ia kasihankan juga.”*²⁹

On other occasion, the concept of corruption had been subtly addressed in the stories on Raja Kashtasab with his officials including the most trustworthy minister known as Rasat Rushan, who was corruptly using his power and position to gain money and gifts from the rich people without the *raja*'s cognizance. Despite an absolute trust that the *raja* bestowed upon Rasat Rushan, he then tainted the trust by taking advantage of the *raja*'s order to intimidate the *rakyat* (common people) towards the command of the *raja*, by asking for a bountiful and the best qualities of gifts in return for a positive response from the *raja*. Although the *raja* never ruled out such commands to ask for gifts, Rasat Rushan believed that it was the best time for him to gain more wealth. As described in *Taj us-Salatin*:

“...maka ia pun menyuratkan kepada segala negeri dan kampung dalam surat itu mengatakan raja sangat murka atas segala rakyat. Maka hendaklah kamu sekalian datang dengan hadiah yang baik dan yang indah-indah layak akan hadiah kepada

²⁸ Bukhari al-Jauhari, *Taj Us-Salatin*, p. xxiii.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 67.

raja. Maka daripada segala pihak itu datanglah segala raja dan menteri dan orang kaya dengan segala benda yang indah-indah daripada takutnya membicarakan sama menteri Rasat Rushan itu katanya... ”³⁰

The lesson that Bukhari al-Jauhari draw from the stories for the benefit and the guidelines of *rajas* and *sultan* was clearly described as, “*Dari kerana itulah lagi mengingatkan pada segala pegawai kerajaannya itu dengan hukum siasat dan periksa supaya ketahuan yang khianat dan yang aniaya dan yang membinasakan harta raja dan negeri raja seperti Raja Kashtasab itu.*”³¹ He then concluded precisely what are the responsibilities, good conducts and actual characters that every official should embrace wholeheartedly by addressing at least 27 conditions or qualities as a minister. In the nineteenth requirement, he stated that, “*Hendaklah menteri itu dalam segala pekerjaan sampaikan hukum yang benar daripada pihak rajanya dan daripada pihak segala rakyat dan sentiasa membicarakan akan kebenaran jua, supaya ia jangan menyesal.*”³²

Like many intellectuals in other civilizations in the world that had given a strong emphasize on the destructions brought by corruptions, the Malay intellectuals such as Bukhari al-Jauhari also gave a solid reminder and condemnation to such misconducts which may harm the Malay civilization by expressing it in a very subtle and exquisite manner through his writing. It has always been the traditions of the Malay society during the traditional era to express their ideas, opinions and oppositions to what the *raja* had commanded in a very diplomatic manner as to avoid from being called as “*penderhaka*” which may result in death penalty.

Conclusion

As a ruler-centred society, the *rajas* and the elite traditional leaders played a significant role in inculcating as well as constructing the values, cultural and belief system amongst the Malays that may support their superiority and supremacy by indoctrinating “sacred” myths, ideas and concepts. Through the practice of feudalism and system of belief that had been constructed by the *rajas*, offences with regards of corruption were given less concern and classified as a petty offence and forgivable. Although the Malays did not use the term “corruption” or “bribery” in a comprehensive meaning before the advent of colonial power, there were many terminologies that were widely used that implied the same concept or idea of corruption as being understood today.

The Malay scholars such as Bukhari al-Jauhari in his masterpiece, *Taj al-Salatin* played a significant role to defy such feudalistic values by writing texts that are related to moral and ethical thoughts in the Malay tradition as well as other disciplines and genres. Although *Sulalatus Salatin* or the Malay Annals mostly represents the feudalism worldview as discussed earlier, nevertheless, the contrast/paradox lessons to that main conception could also be drew from the text through a subtle reading. It is beyond doubt that the Malays had a strong bind with the *raja*’s orders, therefore, those who hold steadfast with such allegiance will even choose to die instead of

³⁰ Ibid, p. 120.

³¹ Bukhari al-Jauhari, *Taj Us-Salatin*, p. 119.

³² Ibid, p. 126.

“menderhaka” to the *raja* as proven by the incident between Tun Hassan Temenggung and Ali Manu Nayan.

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