

THE *TĀJ AL-SALĀTĪN* AND ACEHNESE HISTORY

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المخلص

تعتبر قصة (مرآة الملوك) من القصص المهمة في تاريخ العالم الإسلامي. مغزى هذه القصة يدور حول الخلفاء وإدارة الدولة الإسلامية. ولذلك فإنها تعتبر مثالية وموجهة، مع انتشار الإسلام في كثير من بقاع العالم، فإن مغزى ومعنى هذه القصة لاقى بعض التحويرات المتباينة حسب المناطق المختلفة. تعتبر قصة تاج السلاطين واحدة من هذه القصص المحورة التي استمدت معناها من قصة مرآة الملوك وتعكس حالة جنوب شرق آسيا. كتبت قصة تلج السلاطين في أنشه في سنة ١٦٠٣، وتعكس هذه القصة الحالة الاجتماعية والسياسية والدينية والثقافية في تلك الفترة. تتميز هذه القصة بأنها ليست مثالية وموجهة فقط بل وطرحت قضية تداخل الدين والسياسة التي كانت سائدة في فترة القرن السابع عشر. وهنا يظهر دور قصة تاج السلاطين في مساعدة المؤرخين في صياغة صورة شاملة حول تاريخ أنشه في القرن السابع عشر. على الرغم من أن هذه القصة لم تسرد أي من الأحداث التاريخية بصورة مفصلة، إلا أنها تعتبر مليئة بالمبادئ والقيم التاريخية المهمة، وخاصة تاريخ أنشه.

Abstrak

Cermin Raja-Raja (Mirrors for Princes) merupakan salah satu jenis karya terpenting di dunia Islam. Jenis karya ini berbicara mengenai etika pemerintahan yang Islami yang dimaksud sebagai pegangan bagi para penguasa. Dengan demikian ia berbentuk ideal dan didaktik. Seiring dengan berkembangnya Islam ke berbagai penjuru, jenis karya ini juga menunjukkan perkembangan yang variatif sesuai dengan kondisi dan kebutuhan tempatan. *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* merupakan suatu varian jenis karya ini yang memperlihatkan warna Asia Tenggara. Ditulis di Aceh pada tahun 1603, karya ini merefleksikan kondisi sosial, politik, trend agama dan intelektual pada masanya. Yang menarik dari karya ini adalah ia tidak hanya berbentuk ideal dan didaktik, akan tetapi juga menyentuh berbagai persoalan legal keagamaan dan politik yang relevan di kerajaan Aceh abad ke-17. Di sinilah peran signifikan *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* dalam membantu sejarawan mewujudkan rekonstruksi sejarah Aceh abad ke-17 secara komprehensif. Meskipun ia tidak menawarkan peristiwa-peristiwa historis, namun karya ini sarat dengan konsep dan pandangan dunia yang melatarbelakangi berbagai perilaku dalam sejarah, khususnya Aceh.

Keywords: *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, Aceh, Islam, history.

A. Introduction

Perhaps no one denies that one of the main problems confronting historians in their efforts at reconstructing early history of the Indonesian and Malay archipelago is the extreme scarcity of sources. This is further worsened by the fact that the few indigenous works available are not very much helpful either, for they provide much more myths, legends, fairy tales and even didactic elements rather than historical data. Nevertheless, it is in this critical atmosphere that scholars have worked hard by trying to extract historical data, no matter how scarce they are, from the indigenous sources. That is done by the help of archeological remains and other sources, such as European, Arab, and even Chinese works.¹ These indigenous sources are known as

¹ One of the best examples of efforts at employing indigenous works in the reconstruction of the history of the region is the work by Hoesein Djajadiningrat. He used Malay works as the main sources, with the support of non-indigenous works, in reconstructing the chronology of Acehnese history. See his "Critisch overzicht van den Maleische werken vervatte gegevens over der geschiedenis van het Soeltanaat van Atjeh," *BKI* 65 (1911), pp. 135-265.

“traditional historiographies.” A. Teeuw calls this type of work as traditional historical literature which, by definition, is all literature “pertaining to history, referring to real or presumed facts, events, persons in the past.”²

The literary elements of the works are obvious, yet, as has been proven by scholars, their merit as historical sources are beyond doubt. In his study on the indigenous political systems of Western Malay, J.M. Gullick consults the *Sejarah Melayu* (Malay Annals), the main Malay source for the history of the sultanate of Melaka. Of this work, this scholar admits that “there is a certain amount of historical facts embedded in it. But its main significance in the context of social analysis is that Malay literature and history served to transmit the traditions and values of the community, more especially of its ruling class.”³ Similar case is also found in other indigenous works, such as the *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai*, *Hikayat Aceh*, *Hikayat Banjar*, *Sejarah Banten*, *Babad Tanah Jawi*, to mention a few. It is suffice to quote here the appreciation given by J.C. Bottom to this kind of work. He writes:

The important dates, generally speaking, can be established by other means—by archeological evidence or from foreign sources. The kind of material not so found is exactly that characteristic of Malay historiography—social material, detailed physical descriptions of places and things, implicit revelations of group attitudes and conflicts. If carefully checked and evaluated ... this material helps more than anything else to answer the questions of modern historical research, which is rightly more concerned with social, economic, and conceptual backgrounds than with the simple chronology of political events.⁴

² A. Teeuw, “Some Remarks on the Study of So-Called Historical Texts in Indonesian Languages,” in Sartono Kartodirdjo, ed., *Profiles of Malay Culture: Historiography, Religion and Politics* (Jakarta: Ministry of Education and Culture, Directorate General of Culture, 1976), p. 5.

³ J.M. Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya*, revised ed. (London: The Athlone Press, 1988), pp. 6-7.

⁴ J.C. Bottom, “Some Malay Historical Sources: A Bibliographical Note”, in Soedjatmoko, ed., *An Introduction to Indonesian Historiography* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965), p. 5.

Indeed, recent historians have shown their appreciation of literary works and used them as historical sources.⁵ However, the use of the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* in historical studies is yet to be explored. Known as a Southeast Asian variant of the “Mirrors for Princes” genre of writing, this type of work cannot actually be expected to provide historical accounts. Indeed, being literary and idealistic in nature, this genre is not regarded as a historical source as such. Taufik Abdullah has rightly referred to this work as “a purely theoretical treatise”. As such, he argues, it “does not directly address itself to the empirical situation. It is more a political and moral exhortation than a commentary on events, ...”⁶

Yet, a close scrutiny of the work suggests that the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* can still be a useful reference to be consulted in one’s efforts at exploring the Islamic history of the region as it reveals not only fundamental ideas on various issues—social, political, intellectual and religious—but also raises some issues that are relevant to historical discourses of the day. It is in this context that this article devotes its discussion. The focus will be given to the significance of the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* to the study of the history of the Malay Indonesia archipelago, with special reference to the seventeenth century Aceh, and the problems it might poses in the process.⁷ Yet, before discussing this topic in some details, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the “Mirrors for Princes” genre, of which the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* is a part.

⁵ Discussions on this issue can be found, among others, in Leonard Schulze and Walter Wetzels, eds., *Literature and History* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983); Taufik Abdullah, ed., *Literature and History* (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1986).

⁶ Taufik Abdullah, “The Formation of a Political Tradition in the Malay World”, in Anthony Reid, ed., *The Making of an Islamic Political Discourse in Southeast Asia*, Monash Papers on Southeast Asia, no. 27 (Clayton, Victoria: Monash University, 1993), pp. 41, 45.

⁷ Studies on the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* can be conducted on various dimensions. Among the most important are the study of the theory of state and government contained in the work, and exploring the possible influence of the work upon the conducts of state and government in the region. It is on the latter dimension that this article focuses itself.

B. Mirrors for Princes

One of the most important types of Muslim literary works is called "Mirrors for Princes". There has been no clearly defined format of this kind of genre, yet in general it is perceived as works on the Islamic ethics of statecraft with the purpose of advising rulers on various aspects of government. As such, the writer's main concern is to provide ethical teachings in conducting the affairs of state. In a way, the Mirrors are like Islamic political theories, in the sense that both are concerned with the Islamic character of state. Nevertheless, unlike the latter, the former "do not venture upon systematic treatment of the problems of government and of state and society."⁸

The works in this category, Ann K. S. Lambton claims, are aimed at edifying a person in authority or protesting "against evils of contemporary society and its failure to reach that ideal. Mirrors, thus, in some measure, aimed at the remedy of contemporary political evils."⁹ A similar tone is also provided by Robert Dankoff who insists that Mirrors are "useful during times of crisis in the state ... a change of dynasty, an outside threat or inner disintegration."¹⁰ The wisdom and advice provided by Mirrors are ideal in nature and therefore universal that transcends both time and space.

The content of "Mirrors for Princes" reflects the convergence of Arab-Islamic heritages and tastes that is mixed with strong Persian flavor. On this issue, it is suffice to quote F.R.C. Bagley who writes:

They [Mirrors] show how complete was the synthesis achieved between the Arab-Islamic and old Persian elements which were the main components of medieval Muslim civilization. They make impartial use of examples attributed to Arab Caliphs and Sasanids kings, to Sufi saints and Persian sages; they Islamize Zoroastrian maxims such as 'religion and empire are brothers'; and they assume

⁸ F.R.C. Bagley, "Introduction," in *Ghazālī's Book of Counsel for Kings (Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk)*, trans. by F.R.C. Bagley (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. xiii.

⁹ Ann K.S. Lambton, "Islamic Mirrors for Princes," *La Persia nel medioevo* (1971), p. 420.

¹⁰ Yusuf Khass Hajib, *Wisdom of Royal Glory (Kutadgu Bilig): A Turko-Islamic Mirror for Princes*, trans. by Robert Dankoff (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 4.

rightly or wrongly a substantial identity and continuity between Sasanian and Islamic state institutions.¹¹

The above statement is strongly supported by the fact that in history Islamic civilization developed as a synthesis of various traditions, in which Islam was its main determining factor. One of the strongest elements is those of Persian, whose role is said to have started during the 'Abbasid period. It is for this very reason that scholars agree to accept the view that Muslim civilization constitutes "a Perso-Islamic synthesis."¹² In his work on anthology of belles-lettres, *al-Iqd al-Farīd*, for instance, Ibn Rabbih of Cordoba placed a "Mirror for Princes" at its head in which Persian material is predominant. Even, al-Māwardī of Baṣrah (d. 975/1058), a famous jurist and the author of *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah*, also wrote books of advice on the art of governance for rulers which resemble the type of "Mirrors for Princes" work.¹³ The classical "Mirrors," with Perso-Islamic characteristics, continued to be copied, imitated, and translated during the Mamlūks and the Ottomans period. This must have played significant role in influencing their rulers' thought and action. It is also to be noticed that materials used by "Mirrors" are also transformed into popular folklore.¹⁴

Ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. 139/757) was the first to introduce the knowledge of Sasanian literature into the Islamic world. That was done either through his Arabic translation of some of the literature or his own Arabic works of *ādāb* and advice for rulers. His aims, as those of many Pahlavi writings that he translated, were "to convey ethical teachings, partly to advice on practical expediency and etiquette, and partly—perhaps mainly—to give pleasure through literary elegance and wit."¹⁵ This motive was later transformed into the Islamic world where the authors of the Mirrors did not actually intend to address the concept and theory of state and government as such, rather simply took for

¹¹ Bagley, "Introduction," p. ix.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Indeed, these works have yet to be studied seriously by modern scholars. See Ibid., p. x.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

granted “the existence of an Islamic state in whatever form they themselves knew it.”¹⁶ As such, with their first-hand knowledge of the workings of the government, the authors attempted to compromise with the ideal view of the ruler and the state and then provide some thought on how the ruler might be successful.¹⁷

Despite their common features, considerable variety of emphasis and subject matter found in the “Mirrors for Princes” works is apparent, a fact that was prompted by different background of the authors and the historicity of the works themselves. It is not the intention of this introductory part to discuss this issue in details. It is suffice to state at this point that the problems confronting Muslim community of different times and places provide the Mirrors genre of certain nature and magnitude. Even though a number of earlier Mirrors works were written in Arabic,¹⁸ there were several better known works on “Mirrors” written in Persian, namely the *Qābūs Nāmah* written by Kaykā’ūs in 375/1082, the *Siyāsat Nāmah* of Nizām al-Mulūk (d. 485/1092), and the *Kitāb Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* of Abū Ḥamid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111).

The *Qābūs Nāmah* was addressed by the Ziyārid Prince of Ṭabaristān to his son and heir, Gīlānshāh. Being not so secure on his throne as a vassal of the Seljūqs, Kaykā’ūs addressed his son on matters of statecraft, war, etiquette, domestic life, and sport. This was done in spite of the fact that he was not so sure that his son would be able to retain the throne. In the *Siyāsat Nāmah* realistic nature of exposition and historical materials are also found. This is in addition to the fact that there are also some Islamic and Sasanian anecdotes and sayings included in the work. Indeed, the writer, Nizām al-Mulūk, the illustrious *wazīr* of the Seljūqs, composed the work as a response to the order of Mālik Shāh in which a report on the shortcomings of the Seljūqs empire was to be addressed.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. xi.

¹⁷ See Sajida Sultana Alvi’s “Introduction” to *Advice on the Art of Governance, Mau’izah-i Jahāngīrī of Muḥammad Bāqir Najm-i Sānī: An Indo-Islamic Mirror for Princes*, Persian Text with Introduction, Translation, and Notes by Sajida Sultana Alvi (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY, 1989), p. 4.

¹⁸ Bagley, “Introduction,” pp. xi-xii.

A rather different nature of the Mirrors genre is shown by al-Ghazālī in his work *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk*. The work basically consists of two parts, in which the first is theological, while the second part contains a “Mirror for Princes.” This second part is predominantly ethical enriched with sufistic flavor. Indeed, the work also reflects the author’s view that Muslim civilization is in fact a Perso-Islamic synthesis, in which it brought together both the treasure of Sasanian and Muslim stories and sayings. Bagley has rightly referred to the *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* as “a work of great interest and value, as an exposition of Perso-Islamic beliefs and ethical concepts, and as a compendium of medieval folklore.”¹⁹

Similar feature of Mirrors genre is also found in other places of the Muslim world. On the “Mirrors” works in India, for instance, Sajida Sultana Alvi argues that even though the three most important works of the above mentioned Mirrors influenced the writings of Mirrors in India, yet “the problems confronting the Muslim community in India were of a different nature and magnitude from those in Iran. Consequently, the ideas on statecraft discussed in ... major Indian works of the early medieval period differ from those written in Iran.”²⁰ This idea accordingly leads us to the question of the nature of the Southeast Asian variant of the Mirrors, namely the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*.

C. The *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*

The *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* (the Crown of the Princes) seems to be the only work of the Mirrors genre known in Southeast Asian Islam, although the *Bustān al-Salāṭīn* of al-Rānīrī can also be included in this category of writing, as will be discussed briefly below. There is an ongoing debate on the origins and the author of the work. Based on his analysis of the structure of the work, Ph. S. van Ronkel concludes that the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* is in fact a Persian work that was translated into Malay in Aceh in 1603.²¹ This idea is later adopted by Sir Richard Winstedt who states that “no Persian original has been discovered but the *Crown of Kings* [*Tāj al-Salāṭīn*] is clearly Persian origin, though, as there was no direct

¹⁹ Ibid., p. xvi.

²⁰ Alvi, “Introduction,” pp. 2-3.

²¹ Ph.S. van Ronkel, “De Kroon der Konningen,” *TBG* (1899).

contact with that country, the Malays must have got it from an Indian source.”²²

A different view is however offered by C. Hooykaas and T. Iskandar who claim that the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* is indeed a Malay work composed in Aceh, albeit it uses an Arabic title and contains significantly Persian elements. The idea is based on the fact that the work is not known in the history of Persian literature. Furthermore, it is evident that even though the style of its language, its literary expression and structure reflect Persian elements, yet these are not at all new in Malay literary tradition.²³ This alone constitutes enough reason to support the view that the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* is an original Malay work composed in Aceh by Bukhārī al-Jawhārī.²⁴

As in the case of other Mirrors genre, Persian elements are dominant throughout the work. The verses are all in the form of Persian prosody: the *mathnāwī*, *rubāʿī* and *ghazal*. Persian words are frequently used, such as *Nawrūz* for the New Year. A number of Persian works are explicitly cited and acknowledged, among the most important are *Siyar al-Mulūk* written by Nizām al-Mulūk, *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* by al-Ghazālī, and *Akhlāq-i Muḥsinī*, an ethical treatise written in 1495 by Ḥusayn Wāʿiz Kāshifī. This is in addition to other well-known Persian romances and stories, including the romances of Maḥmūd and Ayaz, the stories of Khusraw and Shirīn, and of Yūsuf and Zulaykhā. If the idea that the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* as an original Malay work is accepted, the author must have been familiar with Persian literary works and tradition.²⁵

The author is said to be certain Bukhārī al-Jawhārī. Yet, there is no further information that can lead us to a full identification of this writer. In his translation of the work into the Dutch, P.P. Roorda van

²² Sir Richard Winstedt, “A History of Classical Malay Literature,” *JMBRAS* 31, 3 (1961), p. 115.

²³ C. Hooykaas, *Over malaise literatuur* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1947), pp. 171-173; T. Iskandar, “Bokhari al-Jauhari and *Taj us-Salatin*,” *Dewan Bahasa* 3 (1965), p. 9.

²⁴ See Abdullah, “The Formation,” pp. 40-41.

²⁵ It is worth-noting at this point that the influence of Persian language and literary tradition in the archipelago was apparent. This can be seen, for instance, in some Malay works, including the *Hikayat Raja-Raja Pasai* and *Hikayat Muhammad Hanafiyah*, to mention a few.

Eijsinga mentions the author as Bukhārī from Johor (Bocharie van Djohor). Another speculation about the writer is also raised which identifies the author by the name of Bukhārī who himself was a merchant of jewelry (*jawhar*). Jawharī is therefore an epithet attached to his job.²⁶

The *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* consists of twenty-four chapters. The first four chapters mainly talk about the nature of man, of God and the world, and some form of pantheism. The first chapter begins with the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet which says: "whoever knows himself knows his God." This is indeed one of the fundamental aspects of the Islamic teachings as developed in sufistic tradition. It is through contemplating the nature of human beings as God's creature (*khalq Allāh*) that they will deeply comprehend God as the Creator of men and the universe. It is the obligation of men to praise God and serve Him only. Therefore, the second chapter starts with the Qur'anic verse (51: 56): "I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me." For this purpose, God sent His messengers among them to convey His teachings that will lead them to the right way. The greatest of the messengers was the Prophet Muḥammad.

The text then goes on to discuss the nature of life in this world. Like other sufistic treatises, the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* reminds people of the nature of this corporeal world as being a play and amusement only and the real life is the one in the hereafter. It cites the Qur'anic verse (8: 28), which says: "And know ye that your possessions and your progeny are but a trial; and that it is God with whom lies your highest reward." Men should be wise enough to benefit from this annihilated worldly life for the eternal life in the hereafter. Therefore, the text insists that the life in this world is just like a dream. When a man wakes up he gets nothing from the dream. The emphasis given on the annihilated nature (*fana'*) of this world eventually brings the author to the topic of death in chapter four. For this purpose, this section begins with the Qur'anic verse (3: 158) which says: "Every soul shall have a taste of death." Another relevant verses are also quoted (55: 26-27): "All that is on earth will

²⁶ Liaw Yock Fang, *Sejarah Kesusatraan Melayu Klasik*, vol. 2 (Jakarta: Erlangga, 1993), p. 70.

perish; but will abide (for ever) the Face of thy Lord, Full of Majesty, Bounty and Honor.” This issue is raised for the purpose of encouraging men to prepare everything for the eternal life in the hereafter.

At this point it is apparent that the messages contained in the first four chapters constitute the introductory part for the main issues raised in the rest of the text. The emphasis given in these first four chapters on philosophical and sufistic discourses on the nature of God, man and the universe do not necessarily suggest that the author sends the message to his readers to ignore this worldly life and therefore focus on the life in the hereafter only. That is done however for the purpose of providing philosophical foundation on which the activities of men are based. In other words, it conveys an important message that worldly life would be based on divine teachings, which would lead people to a prosperous life, both in this world and the hereafter. It is within this rationale that the idea that the objective of the text as an advice for the government on the arts of statecraft should be comprehended.

Discussion in the text then enters the core of its messages, ranging from the topics about the Caliphs and their honorable conducts, just and unjust rulers—both Muslims and infidels—, ministers, officials, writers, envoys, children, right conduct, intelligence, the science of physiognomy, issues concerning rulers, including their qualifications and duties, and their duties to keep faith and to be liberal. In support of the main messages of the text various examples and stories are provided, ranging from the stories of the Prophets and Caliphs to rulers of Syria, Iraq, Persia, Khurāsān, and even Alexander the Great and Aristotle. The work ends with the statement that it should be read and respected by rulers, ministers and officials, people at large, and those who follow its messages.²⁷

Above, the words of both Lambton and Dankoff on this type of genre are cited, in which they insist that one of the aims of the composition of the Mirrors is to provide the remedy for contemporary political evils, and therefore their significance are apparent during the

²⁷ *Tajussalatin*, ed. by Jumsari Jusuf (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Proyek Penerbitan Buku Bacaan dan Sastra Indonesia dan Daerah, 1979), pp. 125-127.

times of crises in the state. This seems to be true in the case of Aceh by the time the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* was composed. Prior to the time of its composition in 1603, Aceh experienced one of the darkest sides of its history. The period from 1579 to 1589 is known as the decade of turmoil, in which all the reigning rulers were murdered. This was very much related to the rise of the *orang kayas* as the real power holders in the country. Augustin de Beaulieu states that these Acehnese elites were so wealthy and powerful that they tended to control the country. They were capable of deposing and installing any ruler they wanted, even if this could only be accomplished by murder,²⁸ an account that is also corroborated by indigenous sources.²⁹ Even though there is no specific mention of the crisis as the main reason for the composition of the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*—indeed the work explicitly addresses its messages to general audiences—there must be a close connection between the political turmoil in Aceh at the time and the composition of this Mirror genre.

There are some evident that show how successful the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* in its mission was. Its popularity and influence are to be seen in such a wide area, including in both the Malay and Javanese speaking regions. Sultan Hamengku Buwono I, the founder of the Yogyakarta dynasty, is reported to have used the work as a guide in matters of statecraft. Pangeran Dipanegara strongly suggested his younger brother (Hamengku Buwono IV) to learn the text. The importance of the work was also evident when it was apparently the first to be copied by the Yogyakarta court authority right after the Java War (1825-1830). Indeed, the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* continued to be popular in Java, where it was copied four times in the nineteenth century³⁰ and was also translated into

²⁸ Augustin de Beaulieu, "The Expedition of Commodore Beaulieu to the East Indies," in John Harris, ed., *Navigatum atque Itinerantium Bibliotheca, or A Complete Collection of Voyages*, Vol. 1 (London, 1764), pp. 746-747.

²⁹ Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānīrī, *Bustanu's-salatin*, bab 2, fasal 13, ed. by T. Iskandar (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 1966), pp. 32-33; *De Hikajat Atjeh*, ed. by T. Iskandar ('s-Gravenhage: N.V. de Nederlandsche Boek-en Steendrukkerij V.H. H.I. Smits, 1959), pp. 95-98. See also Djajadiningrat, "Critisch overzigt," pp. 159-165.

³⁰ See Peter B.R. Carey, "A Further Note on Professor Johns' *Gift Addressed to the Spirit of the Prophet*," *BKI* 131, 3 (1975), p. 344.

Javanese. It was later studied in both the courts of Yogyakarta and Surakarta by “royal aristocrats, aristocratic ladies, high dignitaries and officials, subjects, even Chinese Muslims.”³¹

Even in modern Malay world, this work is still considered to be of paramount importance. Abdullah bin Abdulkadir Munsyi, for instance, claimed that one of the reasons for the Malay backwardness was their rulers’ ignorance of the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, which they should have learned and followed minutely in matters of statecraft. Therefore, he further stated, using the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* as guidance was one of the best solutions for the Malay backwardness, that was besides imitating the British system.³² Taufik Abdullah, in his short but thoughtful article, has even observed the continuation of some fundamental ideas that put forward by the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* to contemporary Islam. Indeed, in the history of Islamic political ideology in the archipelago, Abdullah insists that there is “no text can compete with the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, both in its rigour of discourse and its influence.”³³

The popularity of the work and the significant role that it had played in history is also shown by the fact that the *Bustān al-Salāṭīn* of al-Rānīrī failed to undermine the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* as a guide for rulers. T. Iskandar suggests that one of the aims of al-Rānīrī’s composition of his *Bustān* was to compete with the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* as a guide for rulers in matters of statecraft,³⁴ this was in spite of the fact that the *Bustān* is “the biggest book of its kind in Malay classical literature.”³⁵ The content of the *Bustān* is predominantly concerned with Islamic precepts related to the affairs of statecraft. In this context, the *Bustān* is not different from the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*. Indeed, only one, out of seven books of the work, contains the history of the Muslim peoples, while others comprise materials that can be categorized as the ones belonging to Mirrors for

³¹ Hooykaas, *Over malaise literatuur*, p. 173.

³² See *Kesah Pelajaran Abdoellah bin Abdulkader Moensji dari Singapura ke negeri Kelantan* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1893), as quoted in Abdullah, “The Formation,” note. 33, p. 55.

³³ Abdullah, “The Formation,” pp. 40-41.

³⁴ See T. Iskandar in his analytical introduction to the *Bustān*, p. 4.

³⁵ T. Iskandar, “Three Malay Historical Writings in the First Half of the 17th Century,” *JMBRAS* 40, 2 (1967), p. 52.

Princes work. Yet, still the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* was much more popular and influential than the *Bustān* was.³⁶

Following the statement given by Abdullah above, it should be asked at this point: How far did the text have any influence upon the Acehese state of the seventeenth century? In answering this question, attempts will be made here to explore some concepts and practices that were found in Aceh at the time that are believed to have had close relationship and had been inspired by the ordinances that put forward in the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*. Points and practices raised here are by no means exhaustive, for only few examples of Acehese cases, which are considered fundamental issues, will be presented.

D. The *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* in the Context of Acehese History

Idealistic, didactic, and literary elements of the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* are apparent, and in these it is not much different from other works of its kind in other Muslim worlds. Above, mention is given as to the variety of emphasis and subject matters shown by Mirrors works, albeit common features among them are also evident. Indeed, this very much depends on the background of their writers and circumstances under which they were written. Alvi's view on this issue is also cited, in which she argues that there are some major differences in subject matters and emphasis found in the Mirrors works of Medieval India from those written in Iran, a fact that was prompted by the different nature and magnitude of the problems confronting the Muslim community in India.

Similar case is also found in the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, a Southeast Asian variant of the Mirrors work. It is beyond the scope of this article to provide a comparative study of this work with others of its kind in other Muslim worlds. The intention is mainly to explore the extent to which the work reflects social, political, intellectual, and religious circumstances of the day in the region, particularly in seventeenth century Aceh. The fact that the work was written in Aceh in early

³⁶ It is unfortunate that a complete form of the voluminous work of the *Bustān* has not been discovered yet, a fact that hampers one's effort at conducting a comprehensive study of the work.

seventeenth century might suggest that it indeed reflects social problems, political atmosphere, religious and intellectual trends in the state at the time. This accordingly helps one in his efforts at providing a comprehensive history of Aceh of the day.

As an advice for those who are in power on the arts of governance, the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* insists that there are two most important and difficult tasks that can be undertaken in this world: those of *nubuwwah* (prophecy) and *ḥukūmah* (government). Of the two, *ḥukūmah* is considered to be “the most difficult of the messenger’s tasks, [because] he is required to take care of his flock, love all the poor, command his people, lead them to good deeds, and treat them with justice....”³⁷ Indeed, this is the core of the Islamic political ethos that views Muḥammad not only as the messenger of God but also as a statesman. Therefore, his mission was both religious and political in the sense that it entailed the establishment of an *ummah* (Islamic community).

This concept of rulership extends to other Muslim rulers across the Muslim lands. Therefore, when discussing the issue on rulership, the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* quotes the Qur’anic verse (4: 59): “O ye who believe, obey Allāh and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority” The emphasis here is given on the words “those of you who are in authority ...” when referring to a ruler (*raja* or *sulṭān*). Examples of those in authority are provided and include both the Prophets, such as Yūsuf, Dāwūd, Sulaymān, Mūsā and Muḥammad, and the Caliphs, such as Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī and the Umayyad Caliph ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz. The author further insists that those rulers (*raja-raja*) who follow the path of these friends of God (*segala wali Allāh*) are to be called *ẓill Allāh fī al-‘ālam* or *al-arḍ* (the shadow of God on earth).³⁸

³⁷ Bukhārī al-Jawharī, *Tāj al-Salāṭīn (De kroon aller koningen)*, ed. and trans. into Dutch by P.P. Rooda van Eijsinga (Batavia: Lands Drukkerij, 1827), p. 48; idem, *Taju’s-salatin*, ed. by Jumsari Jusuf (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Proyek Penerbitan Buku Bacaan dan Sastra Indonesia dan Daerah, 1979), p. 29; idem, *Taj us-salatin*, ed. by Khalid Hussain (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 1966), pp. 48-49. Throughout this article, all the texts of the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* mentioned above will be referred to as *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* respectively.

³⁸ *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* (Eijsinga), pp. 49-60; (Jusuf), pp. 29-36; (Hussain), pp. 50-60.

Traditions that enjoin Muslims to obey their rulers are indeed abundant, ranging from those which insist that the ruler is *ẓill Allāh fī al-arḍ* to those which forbid people to curse their ruler.³⁹ This concept of rule entails a religious element that grounds obedience to the ruler in the obligation to obey God and the Prophet. It is a concept that was formulated in early Islam and demonstrated in the titles borne by both the Umayyads and the Abbasids, especially that of *khalīfat Allāh* (the deputy of God).⁴⁰ It is in light of this concept of authority that the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* uses the titles *khalīfat al-Rahmān* (the deputy of the Merciful) and *ẓill Allāh fī al-‘alām* or *al-arḍ* (the shadow of God on earth) in reference to the *sulṭān*.

It is this very concept that was developed and applied in Aceh, where ruler was regarded to have possessed both political and religious authorities and therefore also bore these religious titles. The *Bustān*, in the section of the history of Aceh, states that Iskandar Muda (d. 1636) bore the title *sayyidunā wa mawlānā paduka seri sulṭān Iskandar Muda johan berdaulat ẓill Allāh fī al-‘alām*, while his successor, Iskandar Thānī (d. 1641), also bore the same titles, as did all four *sulṭānāt* (queens).⁴¹ Specific mention is given by al-Rānīrī on Ṣafīyyat al-Dīn (d. 1675) who, being just and humble (*tawāḍuʿ*), was blessed by God with her prosperous and long reign as His *khalīfah*.⁴²

³⁹ In one *ḥadīth* the Prophet says: "God will despise the man who despises God's authority (*sulṭān*) on earth." See Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. 'Uthmān al-Dhahabī, *Siyar A'lam al-Nubalā'*, ed. by Muḥammad Na'im al-'Arqaswāsī and Ma'mūn Ṣaghraji, vol. 3 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1981), p. 20. In another *ḥadīth* the Prophet is reported to have said: "He who honors God's authority (*sulṭān*), God will honor him on the day of resurrection." 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Munāwī, *Fayḍ al-Qadīr fī Sharḥ al-Jāmi' al-Sagḥīr*, vol. 6 (Cairo: Muṣṭafā Muḥammad, 1938), p. 29, no. 8306. For more *ḥadīths* of the Prophet on the *sulṭān* as "the shadow of God on earth" see al-Munāwī, *Fayḍ al-Qadīr*, vol. 4, pp. 142-144, no. 4815-4821.

⁴⁰ Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, trans. by C.R. Barber and S.M. Stern, vol. 2 (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1971), pp. 66-67; Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Century of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 5.

⁴¹ al-Rānīrī, *Bustān*, pp. 36, 44, 58, 60, 72-73; *Adat Atjeh*, Reproduced in Facsimile from a Manuscript in India Office Library, ed. by G.W.J. Drewes and P. Voorhoeve ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1958), pp. 49, 53, 113-116. Throughout this article the texts of *Bustān*'s *salatin* and *Adat Atjeh* will be referred to as *Bustān* and *Adat Aceh* respectively.

⁴² *Bustān*, p. 73.

The concept, which was in practice at the time, was also in line with the thought of the celebrated Acehnese 'ālim, 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Singkilī (d. 1693). In his *Mir'at al-Ṭullāb fī Tashīl Ma'rifat al-Aḥkām al-Shar'iyyah lī al-Mālik al-Wahhāb* (The Mirror for the Seekers in Facilitating the Cognition of God's Laws), al-Singkilī conceives the sultanate of Aceh as a *khalīfah* in its own right. Therefore, a *khalīfah*, whom he defines as "a deputy of God," is obliged to execute God's religion. The first *khalīfah*, to him, was the Prophet Adam. Later, this role was filled by every Prophet down to Muḥammad. After his death, the position was held by the four rightly guided Caliphs. In its development, the *khalīfah*'s position was delegated to several leaders in different corners of the Islamic land.⁴³

Al-Singkilī took a pragmatic approach in witnessing Muslims as an *ummah* scattered across a vast territory and governed by various political entities. For this very reason, the emergence of several *khalīfahs* was justified. One of these *khalīfahs*, al-Singkilī insists, was *Sultānah Tāj al-'Alam Ṣafīyyat al-Dīn berdaulat zill Allāh fī al-'alam*, serving as "the deputy of God in executing our Lord's orders in the blessed (*mubārak*) country of Aceh Dār al-Salām."⁴⁴ For al-Singkilī, therefore, the title *khalīfah* implies the duty to foster God's religion, an idea that is also insisted in the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, and even in the *Bustān*.

Accordingly, religious authority of a ruler, in addition to a political one, was absolutely necessary. Yet, it must be borne in mind that this authority did not necessarily mean that he was the most authoritative figure in religious matters, for it was the 'ulamā' who in fact held the authority. The ruler's religious authority here was meant more in the sense that it was through his power and leadership that God's religion would be implemented. This concept can best be described as a "religiously sanctioned authority."

From this perspective, ruler's need for the 'ulamā' was inevitable. Indeed, both the *Adat Aceh* and the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* explicitly require of

⁴³ 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Singkilī, *Mir'at al-Ṭullāb fī Tashīl Ma'rifat al-Aḥkām al-Shar'iyyah lī al-Mālik al-Wahhāb*, MS (Banda Aceh: Universitas Syiah Kuala, 1971), p. 2.

⁴⁴ *Al-Khalīfah fī tanfīdh aḥkām mawlatinā fī al-arḍ al-mubārak al-Jāwīyyah al-Āshīyyah* or *khalīfah pada melakukan segala hukum Tuhan dalam tanah Jawi yang dibangsanakan kepada negeri Aceh Dār al-Salām yang mubārak*. See *Ibid.*, p. 3.

the ruler that he respect and consult the *'ulamā'* on religious matters.⁴⁵ Having the *'ulamā'* class to play significant role in a state was not peculiar to Aceh, as other sultanates also provided enough room for them to actively express their religious, social and political concern. Yet, what was specific about Acehnese state at the time was that the *'ulamā'* held various important state's positions, from those which were religious in nature, such as *shaykh al-Islām*, *qāḍī* and *faqīh*, to political ones, such as the advisor of the ruler, a chief councillor, and the deputy of the sultān. This is in spite of the fact that the fate of the *'ulamā'* would depend on ruler's whim and mercy.⁴⁶

In his *Bustān*, al-Rānīrī also talks about the respect that Acehnese rulers showed for the *'ulamā'*. Sultān Ḥusayn (r. 1571-1579) is said to have shown his love and respect for the *'ulamā'*. It was during his reign that a Shāfi'ī *'ālim* from Egypt, Muḥammad Azharī, came to the state where he taught and died. The same respect was also shown by Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn of Perak origin (r. 1579-1586) during whose reign several *'ulamā'* came to the country for the purposes of, among others, teaching religious sciences. Details are provided as to their names, origins, and the subjects they taught.⁴⁷ Yet, this does not necessarily mean that other rulers did not have high respect for the scholars of religion. The mention of these two rulers in this respect was very much related to the coming of the *'ulamā'* to the country during their reign.

The ruler's possession of both political and religious authorities eventually requires a loyalty on the part of the ruled. Indeed, as mentioned above, the rule was necessary for the purpose of implementing God's religion. Yet, what is interesting about the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* in this case is that it raised some relevant hypothetical questions with regard to the loyalty required from the ruled towards a tyrant. The text explains as follows:

⁴⁵ *Adat Aceh*, p. 13; *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* (Eijsinga), pp. 73-74; (Jusuf), pp. 42-43; (Hussain), pp. 75-76.

⁴⁶ For further discussion on the role of the *'ulamā'* class in seventeenth century Aceh, see Amirul Hadi, *Islam and State in Sumatra: A Study of Seventeenth Century Aceh* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004), pp. 147-166.

A ruler who is to be obeyed is the one who follows the ordinances of God and His messenger.

Question: How could you obey a blasphemous, ignorant, and irreligious ruler who in fact does not follow God's religion and the mission of the Prophet?

Answer: We obey just rulers in two things: the first is his words, and the second is his deeds. While in the case of an unjust ruler we only follow his words, not his wrong doings.

Question: In the case of a tyrant, one is expected to ignore both his words and deeds. Yet, how can we follow his words?

Answer: We follow his words for the sake of avoiding disorder (*fitnah*) in the country. If it is not for such a difficulty, we are not to follow both his words and deeds, and even we are not to look at his face. Indeed, the ruler is wrong, for he has turned his face away from God's religion. Those who deviate from God's laws and turn against His religion are the enemies of God and His messenger. It is our duty to treat God's enemies as our enemies.⁴⁸

How should we relate these hypothetical questions to the Acehese history at the time? This is certainly not an easy question to answer. What we do know, as mentioned above, is that prior to the composition of the work Aceh experienced a decade of political turmoil, from 1579 to 1589, in which all the reigning rulers were murdered. A succession dispute began right after the death Sulṭān Ḥusayn in 1579. This, accordingly, ushered in the era of *orang kayas* (nobles) who, with their power, later appointed Ḥusayn's four-month-old son to be a Sulṭān. This young ruler died seven months later and was then succeeded by his uncle, Abangta 'Abd al-Jalīl, ruler of Pariaman who later styled himself as Sulṭān Sri 'Ālam. This new ruler was also killed after only two months in power.⁴⁹ Reasons behind his murder are difficult to determine. However, traditional sources provide some information on this tragedy. The *Hikayat Aceh* relates that state officials and the '*ulamā*' were said to

⁴⁷ *Bustān*, pp. 32-33.

⁴⁸ *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* (Jusuf), pp. 29-30.

⁴⁹ *Bustān*, 32-33. This source is silent on how this ruler was killed. Djajadiningrat likewise neglects to give an explanation on this issue in his "Critisch overzicht," p. 159.

have taken steps to overthrow him from power. The reason behind this action was Sri 'Ālam's leaning towards the chiefs of the west-coast and his overspending of the state's budget for the benefits of the chiefs. That was besides the fact that he was portrayed as a devout and generous ruler.⁵⁰ The *Bustān*, however, depicts him as a bad-tempered person, unwise and weak in leadership skills.⁵¹

Whatever the reasons behind the murder, it was evident that it had something to do with the real power holders in the country, i.e. the state officials. It was they who later selected Zayn al-'Ābidīn, the son of 'Abd Allāh (killed in the campaign against the Portuguese in 1568), to be a sultān. The political situation during his reign was not much better either, when he was murdered only a few months after gaining the throne. Traditional sources relate the situation with his lax morals and tyrannical attitudes.⁵² After the death of Zayn al-'Ābidīn, the country came to be ruled by Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn of Perak origin for seven years (r. 1579-1586).⁵³ The *Bustān* depicts him in a positive light. He was a devout Muslim, a just ruler, and a strong defender of Islam who loved and respected the 'ulamā'. He also urged his people to comply with Islamic *sharī'ah*. 'Alā' al-Dīn's reign was also marked with the flourishing of religious sciences and the arrival of several 'ulamā' to the country. Nevertheless, the reign of this popular ruler too ended up violently. Indeed, for unknown reasons, he was killed in 1586.⁵⁴ Later, state officials appointed Sultān 'Alā' al-Dīn Ri'āyat Shāh from Inderapura in West Sumatra as a new ruler. This Sultān reigned for about three years (1586-1589) and was killed in the end as well.⁵⁵

The murder of five rulers in a decade indicates the serious political crisis that Aceh experienced at the time. The dominant political power

⁵⁰ *Hikayat Aceh*, 95-96. See also J. Kathirithamby-Wells, "The Inderapura Sultanate: The Foundations of Its Rise and Decline, from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries," *Indonesia* 21 (1976), p. 67; Djajadiningrat, "Critisch overzicht," pp. 164-165.

⁵¹ *Bustān*, 32-33.

⁵² *Ibid.*; *Hikayat Aceh*, pp. 96-98.

⁵³ *Bustān*, p. 33; Djajadiningrat, "Critisch overzicht," p. 159.

⁵⁴ *Bustān*, p. 35; Djajadiningrat, "Critisch overzicht," p. 161-162.

⁵⁵ *Bustān*, p. 34; Djajadiningrat, "Critisch overzicht," pp. 164-165; Kathirithamby-Wells, "The Inderapura Sultanate," p. 68.

of the *orangkayas* was to play its major parts in the crisis. This very reason prompted the next ruler, 'Alī Mughāyat Shāh al-Mukammil (r. 1589-1604), to crush the power of these elite group. Indeed, the accession of this ruler signified the beginning of the era of a "high degree of centralization"⁵⁶ in the country. It was not coincident therefore that the composition of the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* took place during the reign of this ruler. In other words, the work was written right after the serious political crisis had ended. This signifies that the composition of the work was intended, among others, to remedy contemporary political evils in the country. It was this political turmoil too seems to have inspired the author to raise the dialogues and the hypothetical questions cited above.

Another point raised by the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, which was in practice in Aceh, is the prescription that on the occasion of every religious feast (*hari raya*) and Friday, a male ruler has to go to the mosque in a full stately procession (*dengan takhta kerajaannya dan kebesarannya*).⁵⁷ This point, albeit shortly, deserves to be discussed here as Aceh was both an Islamic state and a kingdom with its imperial tradition. Interestingly, while the precept is provided by the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, its procedures are to be found in the *Adat Aceh*, a court record that is concerned with the affairs of state, including those of royal processions and ceremonies.

Being a court manual and record, the *Adat Aceh* is rich in information on the cultural and administrative dimensions of Aceh of our period, since two-thirds of its contents relate mainly to the seventeenth century.⁵⁸ This being the case, the text is central to any attempt at defining Acehnese culture in that era. One of the four major

⁵⁶ See also Anthony Reid, "Trade and the Problem of Royal Power in Aceh, c. 1500-1700," in Anthony Reid and Lance Castle, eds., *Pre-Colonial State Systems in Southeast Asia* (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS, 1979), p. 48.

⁵⁷ *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, (Eijsinga), p. 64; (Hussein), p. 64; (Jusuf), p. 38.

⁵⁸ The work was compiled gradually over a considerable period of time, and its surviving form was copied at the end of the second decade of the nineteenth century for the purpose of providing the English authority in Penang with the information necessary for establishing an Anglo-Acehnese commercial treaty. Nevertheless, it consists largely of material collected in the seventeenth century. See G.W.J. Drewes and P. Voorhoeve in their "Introduction" to the *Adat Atjeh*, pp. 7-8; T. Puvanarajah and R. Suntharalingam, "The Aceh Treaty of 1819," *JSEAS* 2, 3 (1961), pp. 36-46.

areas covered by this text concerns court ceremonials and processions, both religious and non-religious, which is referred to in the work as *Adat Majlis Raja-Raja* (Etiquette to be observed at the Court).⁵⁹ A close scrutiny of the prescriptions given in the *Adat Aceh* for the ceremonies indicates a highly developed and regulated set of court rituals that unite for the most part both religious and traditional ceremonies within a single protocol.

What is also important to notice here is that Iskandar Muda was the one who, according to the text, ordered the codification of this area of state practice.⁶⁰ Indeed, it was this prescription, which is put forward by the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, that this ruler seems to have had a hand in establishing. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that he was the one who invented the traditions, as some practices of state ceremonies and processions are evident before his reign. What is also important to state here is that the codification of the ceremonies and processions coincided with the period of a high degree of centralization in the state. That being the case, “in instituting such a rule, Iskandar Muda, the greatest and strongest ruler of seventeenth century Aceh, must have intended to show his people, officials, and foreigners the grandeur of his power as the strongest man in the region and the ruler of a highly unified Islamic country.”⁶¹ This was in addition to his intention to pursue what the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* had prescribed. In short, the tradition of holding state processions and ceremonies on religious occasions was prescribed in the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, elaborated in a court manual (*Adat Aceh*), and most importantly was practiced in history. Now, let us briefly explore the practices in history.

The earliest information at our disposal on the possible royal procession to the mosque on Friday is as early as 1599. On September 10th of the year, Frederick de Houtman paid a visit to the palace to meet al-Mukammil (d. 1604). His meeting with the ruler, however, had to be

⁵⁹ Other sections are *Perintah Segala Raja-Raja* (Regulations for Kings), *Silsilah Raja-Raja di Bandar Aceh* (Genealogy of the Kings of Aceh), and various regulations concerning the port of the capital.

⁶⁰ *Adat Aceh*, pp. 48-50; Drewes and Voorhoeve, “Introduction,” pp. 17-18.

⁶¹ Hadi, *Islam and State*, p. 123.

postponed until the afternoon, for, as the *shahbandar* told him, the Sultān and his court had gone to the mosque to attend Friday prayer.⁶² Even though there is no further information provided by de Houtman on the Friday congregational prayer, it is safe to suggest that a royal procession to the mosque on Friday must have already become an established practice by the time. In addition to de Houtman's account, English merchants under Thomas Best witnessed two royal processions going to the mosque on two successive Fridays, 26 June and 2 July 1613. Of the Friday procession held on 2 July, Ralph Croft writes:

... we meett his majestie in most rioall staitt in the waie to the church with great solemntie. He had, for his guard [that] went before him, 200 great ollephantes, 2000 small shott, 2000 pikes, 200 launces, 100 bowmen; 20 naked swords of pure gould caried before him. 20 fencers went before him, plainge with swordes and targettes. A horse [was] leed before him, covered with beaten gould, the bridle sett with stones; at his saddle crutch a shaff [i.e. sheaf] of arrowes, the quiver of beaten gould, sett with pretious stones. Before him went his towe sons, of 8 or 9 yeares old, arrayed with jewelles and rich stones. His majestic rode upon an ollephant; his saddle of pure gold; his slave behynd him in rich arraye, with his beetle box and a fann of pure gould in his hand, to keepe the flies from the kinge. The kinges robbes weere so rich that I cannot well describe them. He had a turband upon his head, sett with jewells and prettious stones invalluable; creast and sword of pure gold, the skaberd sett with stones. Before him went an ollephant with a chaire of staitt, covered all with beatten sillver, that, if yt should chaunce to rayne, he might change ollephants. This ollephant had casses maid of pure gould, to putt his teeth. From the church he retourned to a place of pleasure prepared for his entertaynement.⁶³

This account is no doubt a good example of a procession being described by an eyewitness. Yet, it does not take us into the mosque,

⁶² W.S. de Unger, ed., *De oudste reizen van de zeeuwen naar Oost-Indie, 1598-1604* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1948), p. 75.

⁶³ For more description on these two royal processions, see Thomas Best, *The Voyage of Thomas Best to the East Indies, 1612-1614*, ed. by W. Foster (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1934), pp. 168-171. For the royal procession held on 26 June 1613, see pp. 168-169 of the work.

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⁶⁰ *Adat Aceh*, pp. 48-50; Drewes and Voorhoeve, “Introduction,” pp. 17-18.

⁶¹ Hadi, *Islam and State*, p. 123.

where the ritual took place. For this portion of ceremony, we have to turn to the *Adat Aceh*.

The few above provided examples strongly suggest that the royal procession going to the mosque every Friday was a well-established tradition in Aceh, in particular during the first half of the seventeenth century. While it may be difficult to imagine how so elaborate a royal procession could have been held on weekly basis, foreign accounts nevertheless seem to confirm this practice.⁶⁴ This tradition however was not held during the rule of the queens. This point is explicitly referred to by the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, in which it is stated that female ruler is not to hold the procession.⁶⁵

The ritual and the festival of both and Idul Adha were also performed in Aceh in full stately manner. Even, before the celebration, state rituals in connection with the fasting month of Ramadan were also held. The first and most important of these was the ceremony celebrating the coming of the month (*hari memengang puasa*) while the other two, though less elaborate, were rituals pertaining to the vigils for *laylat al-qadr* (the night of power) and its related festival on the twenty-seventh of the month.⁶⁶

A good example of a royal procession going to the mosque celebrating the Idul Fitri is the account provided by S. de Weert who witnessed the event in 1603. He wrote:

In the meantime, a great elephant gracefully adorned was brought into the courtyard. Then young king [i.e. 'Alī Ri'ayat Shah], wearing a kind of gilt helmet, mounted the elephant and seated himself under the magnificent canopy; in front of him sat one wearing a gold coronet and being well-dressed, who controlled the elephant, and also the other handsomely dressed behind him.... Thus, the young prince went to the mosque, accompanied by many nobility, a great number of elephants and a small number of horses; in addition, several thousand people, carrying arms, standards, arrows and

⁶⁴ For further discussion on the procession on Friday see Hadi, *Islam and State*, pp. 125-128.

⁶⁵ *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, (Eijsinga), p. 64; (Hussain), p. 64; (Jusuf), p. 38.

⁶⁶ See *Ibid.*, pp. 128-131.

flintlocks, also followed on foot. There was a tremendous noise of various instruments, such as horns, trombones, kettledrums and cymbals.

Having reached a small house or building, which stands in the large square or bazaar, the king alighted from his elephant and took a rest for a while; then mounted again the same elephant from one side and dismounted from it on the other, and mounted another elephant made ready there; and on this other elephant he continued on his way to the large mosque, which stands at the end of the large bazaar near the palace.⁶⁷

Even though there are no further reports provided by European sources on royal procession during the Idul Fitri rituals and festivals, there is little doubt that the tradition was well practiced in Aceh at the time. The *Adat Aceh* provides us with the details of the ceremony, which started and ended at the palace. Detailed royal procession and ʿĪd ritual are also provided by the text.⁶⁸

A far greater and more important religious festival at the time was the state ceremony and procession held during the festival of the Sacrifice (Idul Adha). Again, the *Adat Aceh* provides many details concerning this procession, which featured many more participants and royal insignia than most other such events.⁶⁹ As I have already indicated elsewhere, the description of this festival as provided by the *Adat Aceh* most probably took place during Iskandar Muda's time. The mention of the participation of Shaykh Shams al-Dīn is fundamental evidence of this.⁷⁰ Yet, a description of the festival held in 1637 under the newly crowned Sultān Iskandar Thānī as reported by Peter Mundy is worth mentioning.

Mundy describes that a royal procession to the mosque on this occasion was held in a stately manner in which the sovereign rode on a

⁶⁷ W. van Waerwijk, "Oost-Indische reyse onder den Admiral Wijbrant van Waerwijk," *B & V*, vol. 2 (1974, reprint), as quoted and translated in Takeshi Ito, "The World of the Adat Aceh: A Historical Study of the Sultanate of Aceh," Ph.D. dissertation, Australian National University, 1984, pp. 227-228.

⁶⁸ *Adat Aceh*, pp. 54-59. See also, Hadi, *Islam and State*, pp. 131-134.

⁶⁹ *Adat Aceh*, pp. 63-91.

⁷⁰ Hadi, *Islam and State*, p. 140.

great and richly adorned elephant. The procession was so lengthy, and included many state officials, armies, servants, weapons and regalia, that there was only little space for movement and order. Therefore, the procession, to him, was so confused. Yet, he further remarks that the procession “was rare and strange to behold....”⁷¹ Mundy was certainly unable to describe the ‘Id ritual taking place in the mosque. Yet, he was informed that there were five hundred young buffaloes sacrificed on that occasion. The Sulṭān was said to have been the first to slaughter a victim, while other appointed officials slaughtered the rest. Then, the meat of the animals was distributed among the people.⁷²

It is worth-noting here that each of the religious processions and ceremonies described above was inseparably linked to the traditional royal ritual embedded in them. Indeed, the religious rituals constituted an essential part of royal tradition and *vice versa*, the legitimation of which must be viewed in the context of Aceh’s character as an Islamic sultanate whose ruler possessed both political and religious authority. The ceremonies became a symbolic expression of authority, both political and religious. Therefore, all the processions and ceremonies briefly described above involved state officials (religious and non-religious), court functionaries and servants, royal insignia, and especially the palace and the mosque—as the two most important symbols of the state. The palace was the pivot of the ceremonies, in that it was the point from which the ceremonies started and ended. What is also interesting about this tradition is that the ruler was placed at the center of the ceremonies. All the protocols, rituals, and processions with their extraordinary performances were concentrated on the ruler at their center, above all, as the supreme head of an Islamic sultanate. As such, there was to be seen a complete intertwining of traditional ceremonies with religious rituals. In other words, traditional royal rituals and religious rituals became one. Indeed, this was in line with the prescription that put forward by the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* that the religious processions and ceremonies are to be held in a full stately procession (*dengan takhta kerajaan dan kebesarannya*).

⁷¹ Peter Mundy, *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608-1667*, ed. by R.C. Temple, vol. 3, pts. 1 and 2 (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1919), p. 123.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126.

As mentioned earlier, one of the main characteristics of the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* is that it also poses hypothetical questions which are theoretical and legal in nature; and what makes these questions interesting for our purposes is that they are very much relevant to historical realities in Aceh at the time. Female rule is one of the issues raised. By quoting the *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* by al-Ghazālī, the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* numbers ten qualifications of ruler, one of which the ruler should be “male”, not female.⁷³ Yet, the text permits the female rule under certain circumstances. The text says:

Female cannot be crowned, except during the turbulent times; that is when the ruler of the country has passed away without leaving a male heir. In this case, a female heir can be crowned as ruler, in accordance with people’s desire to avoid *fitnah* (corruption) in the country.

Question: What are the differences between male and female ruler on the throne?

Answer: The differences between them are: male ruler has to be seated on his throne in front of his people, while female ruler is forbidden (*haram*) to do so. At any audience her face cannot be seen, but she should be seated behind a curtain (*tirai*).... Her voice is to be heard by her people, in order for them to know whether or not their queen is present; while the voice of other women is forbidden to be heard. A male ruler has to go to the mosque on every Friday in a full state procession, a tradition that is not to be held by a female ruler.⁷⁴

⁷³ Female rule has been a controversial issue in Islam. Religious scholars claim that woman has no right to become a ruler. The argument is based on the idea that by nature woman has no capability in ruling a community (*ummah*). For further discussion on this issue, see Abū Ḥamid al-Ghazālī, *al-Faḍā’ih Bāṭiniyyah*, ed. by ‘Abd Raḥmān al-Badawī (Cairo: al-Dār al-Qawmiyyah li al-Ṭibā’ah wa al-Nashr, 1964), pp. 180-181; Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ismā’īl al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Jāmi’ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. by M. Ludolf Krehl, 4 vols (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1862-1908), vol. 3, pp. 183-184, vol. 4, pp. 376-377; Ibn Ḥajr al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī bi Sharḥ al-Bukhārī* (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Ḥalabī wa Awlāduh, 1959), vol. 9, pp. 190-193, vol. 16, pp. 164-166; Abū Ja’far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, ed. by Muḥammad Maḥmūd Shākir and Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Ma’ārif, n.d.), vol. 8, pp. 290-291; Abū Fidā’ al-Ḥafīd Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm*, ed. by Maḥmūd Ḥasan, et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1994), vol. 1, p. 503.

⁷⁴ *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, (Eijsinga), p. 64; (Hussain), p. 64; (Jusuf), p. 38

This statement is certainly crucial in that it helps us understand the controversy surrounding female ruler in Aceh at the time. Let us follow this issue briefly.

In the first place, the text explicitly states that female rule is permitted only during the time of necessity (*darūrah*), that is when there is no male heir to be crowned. Indeed, a crisis of succession occurred in 1641 right after the death of Iskandar Thānī, who left no male heir. Nicolaus de Graaff, who was in Aceh at the time, provides us with a clear picture of the day where the *orang kayas*, he states, played an important role in bringing the state to the bank of crisis, “for each one wanted to be king.”⁷⁵ Agreement was finally reached to crown Iskandar Thānī’s widow, Puteri Sri Permaisuri, as the ruler with the title Tāj al-‘Ālam Ṣafīyyat al-Dīn (r. 1641-1675). Indeed, the rise of Tāj al-‘Ālam to the pinnacle of power marked the beginning of the rule of queens over Aceh, which lasted until 1699 with the Queen Kamalāt Shāh as its last ruler.

The event clearly suggests that the emergence of the first queen should be seen in the context of a political crisis that came to represent a serious threat to the social order. The ambition on the part of the *orang kayas*, as reported by de Graaff, was apparent, and therefore constituted a threat to the social and political order of the state. The threat seemed to have been taken seriously as, in the previous century, Aceh experienced a decade of turmoil, from 1579 to 1589, in which all the reigning rulers were murdered. The fact that the *orangkayas* were the real political holders in the country was supported by information provided by de Beaulieu as cited above. He states that this Acehnese elites were so wealthy and powerful that they tended to control the country.

Another threat came from some members of the ruling family themselves. Whether or not there was a male heir within the royal family is an important point to be raised. Based on the oral tradition and genealogies of the Polem family, Anthony Reid identifies a certain

⁷⁵ Nicolaus de Graaff, *Reisen van Nicolaus de Graaff gedan naar alle gewesten des werelds, beginnende 1639 tot 1687 inclus* (‘s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1930), p. 13. Djajadiningrat, “Critisch overzicht,” pp. 135-265.

Teuku Itam (*Polem*) as an illegitimate son of Iskandar Muda. In Aceh, the term *polem* means elder brother. The assignment of this title to Teuku Itam therefore signified that he was the elder brother of the queen. As a matter of fact, he was the progenitor of the Polem family, which was to become famous as the “*Panglima* of the powerful upland Sagi of the 22 *mukims*.”⁷⁶ The *Polem* however was not crowned as a sultan for one possible reason, i.e. he was an illegitimate son of Iskandar Muda and therefore was illegible to be crowned. It was probably this very reason that prompted the family to move to the interior, which was experiencing considerable economic growth.⁷⁷

The support coming from religious circle for the female rule was also evident, and this played its significant role not only in justifying the rule of the first queen but also in perpetuating their rules to the end of the century. The support was well represented by both Nūr al-Dīn al-Rānirī (d. 1658) and ‘Abd al-Ra’ūf al-Singkilī (d. 1693). By the time the crisis of succession occurred, al-Rānirī was still in Aceh, serving as the holder of the office of the *shaykh al-Islām*. His support was therefore crucial in that matter. Indeed, Cheach Boon Kheng writes, “this was no small praise coming from such a conservative cleric as ar-Raniri, who had defended the queen, his late patron’s wife, from the viewpoint of Islam It is possible that only ar-Raniry’s powerful support and influence had legitimized the appointment of his benefactor’s widow as Sultanah.”⁷⁸ The support from another *‘ālim*, al-Singkilī, for the rule was also apparent. Returning from the Middle East in 1661, al-Singkilī occupied the office of the *shaykh al-Islām* in the country until his death in 1693. It was his support for the queens that seemed to be one of the main reasons behind the long female rules. After all, for the Acehnese the issue was viewed not only a political matter but, more importantly, religious in nature. Therefore, it was a religious legitimacy that was responsible for the rise of the female rule, and it was also a religious

⁷⁶ Anthony Reid, “Trade and the Problem of Royal Power in Aceh c. 1550-1700,” in Anthony Reid and Lances Castle, eds., *Pre-Colonial State Systems in Southeast Asia* (Kuala Lumpur: MBRAS, 1979), p. 53.

⁷⁷ For further discussion on this issue see Hadi, *Islam and State*, pp. 82-86.

⁷⁸ Cheach Boon Keng, “Power Behind the Throne: The Role of Queens and Court Ladies in Malay History,” *JMBRAS* 66, 1 (1993), p. 11.

fatwā (legal ruling) that eventually ended the rule in 1699.⁷⁹

The last historical example that should be examined in line with the prescription given in the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* is the style of the throne used by the queens. As quoted above, the text explicitly states that a female ruler was neither to be seen in public, nor could she meet with any man face to face. Only her voice was allowed to be heard. It is this ordinance that was strictly followed by the queens, as shown, among others, by the style of the throne used during their times.

European writers and visitors have provided us with clear picture on this matter. On the queens' throne, in general, William Marsden writes: "a curtain of gauze was hung before it, which did not obstruct the audience, but prevented any perfect view."⁸⁰ A more accurate description is provided by Thomas Bowrey. At his audience with Ṣafīyyat al-Dīn, Bowrey found the sovereign seated within lodge. Therefore, anyone who had an audience with her had to sit facing the lodge. In such a case, the act of obeisance was made to the ruler's window. "She all the while looketh upon us," Bowrey writes, "although wee cannot see her."⁸¹ This picture was indeed in line with the one provided by al-Rānīrī in his *Bustān*. This *ʿālim* describes that the throne of Ṣafīyyat al-

⁷⁹ Anthony Reid has analyzed this subject in brief. He views the issue from a politico-economic perspective. The long female rules, he argues, were in fact prompted by the ambition of the commercially oriented aristocrats (*orangkayas*) to control the power for their own benefits. The phenomenon was not peculiar to Aceh, as some other Southeast Asian states also had similar experience. Patani, for instance, was under consecutive female rules from 1584 to 1688. Reid further supports this view by the fact that the rise of the female rules in both countries coincided with the emergence of the port-states as the main commercial centers, especially Aceh and Patani. It was only after 1700, when the influence of the *orangkayas* declined, he argues, that female rules came to an end. While this thesis seems credible, it fails to offer a comprehensive explanation of the female rules. As such, a politico-religious dimension of the issue was also to play its dominant role. For the Acehnese, the issue was not only political but also religious in nature. For further discussion on this issue, see Anthony Reid, "Female Roles in Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia," *Modern Asian Studies* 22, 3 (1988), pp. 629-645; Hadi, *Islam and State*, pp. 79-87.

⁸⁰ William Marsden, *The History of Sumatra*. A reprint from the 3rd edition, ed. and introd. By John Bastin (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 402.

⁸¹ Thomas Bowrey, *A Geographical Account of Countries Round the Bay of Bengal, 1669 to 1679*, ed. by R.C. Temple (Cambridge: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1905), pp. 307, 309.

Dīn was made of gold of high quality, and was located within a curtain (*kelambu*) ornamented with gold. It was to this throne that all state's officials, aristocrats, and servants paid their homage.⁸²

Similar feature was also described by English ambassadors who witnessed the throne of Queen Zakiyyat al-Dīn in 1684. They write:

There is adjoyneing to this [the place of audience] an upper and open roome where the Queen sitts in a throwne of ivory and tortyse, and round her ladyes, and below the throwne two other seates of ladyes. Before this roome there is hung of a thin gawes which hinders not the audience but prevents any perfect view of the Queen. Without the roome there is a gallery where are placed the ornaments of states, amongst which are most remarkble three large bucklers of masse gold and three fowling peeces likewise of gold.⁸³

Again, one of the prescriptions put forward by the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* was in practice in seventeenth century Aceh.

E. Concluding Remarks

The forgoing discussion has shown the role of the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* in the study of the history of the Muslim people in the archipelago. Even though they are by no means exhaustive, the few historical cases of seventeenth century Aceh have proved to have been strongly connected with the points prescribed in the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*. Being literary and idealistic in nature, the work certainly does not provide historian with pass events and chronicles of any sort. Indeed, as a "Mirror for Princes" genre it is not concerned with the subject. It was rather intended as an advice for rulers, and those who are concerned, in matters of statecraft. Nevertheless, the work is still useful in one's effort at achieving a comprehensive reconstruction of the region's history, especially that of Aceh.

⁸² *Maka Hadharat Yang Di-muliakan Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala pun semayam di atas singgahsana emas kudrati sa-puluh mutu, yang bertatahkan ratna mutu manikam, dalam kelambu rawa yang berpakankan emas, di-hadap segala raja2, dan para menteri, dan segala anak dan isteri hulubalang sekalian, dan segala dayang2, perwara, isi maligai sekalian. Al-Rānīrī, Bustān, pp. 61-62.*

⁸³ Anthony Farrington, ed., "Negotiations at Aceh in 1684: An Unpublished English Document," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 27 (1999), p. 25.

In the first place, the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* reflects the social, political, intellectual, and religious trends of its respective times. In this, it provides historian with rich material and concept that lay behind certain behaviors and practices in history. It is evident, among others, in the concept of authority of ruler, both political and religious, as expressed in the titles and epithets used. Interestingly, the concept was also dominant in traditional historiographies, in the works of the *‘ulamā’*, and even proven by some European sources. Indeed, Abdullah has rightly suggested that “the validity of the ideas expressed by this text can only be verified by looking at various traditional historiographies, which unlike the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*, have to deal with actual historical experiences and collective memories of their respective political communities.”⁸⁴ At this point the ideas that are prescribed in the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* reflects the intellectual atmosphere and religious trend of the day. Nevertheless, when these ideas are also found in other works, such as in the *Bustān*, *Adat Aceh* and even in the *Mir’at al-Ṭullāb* to mention a few, it does not necessarily mean that the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* had some influence on some points raised in the works. The case in point is seen, among others, in the concept of rulership and authority. Indeed, there is no clue that might lead us to this conclusion. But, what is certain is that the ideas discussed in the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* are validated by the works.

By and large, the influence that the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* had on the seventeenth century Aceh are evident. In this, the work is believed to have played significant role in influencing its rulers’ and people’s thoughts and actions. Interestingly, the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* only provide brief prescription on certain issues, while its elaboration is found in other works, such as the *Adat Aceh* and, to some degree, the *Bustān*. Few historical cases provided above, which include the state’s religious processions and ceremonies, female rules and other related issues, are good examples of the state’s policies and practices being influenced by the prescriptions put forward in the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn*.

In the final analysis, the reconstruction of the past events is not only concerned with the practical aspects of inquiry. To explore more into the ideas and motivations that lay behind certain practices in history

⁸⁴ Abdullah, “The Formation,” p. 41.

is also crucial. This inquiry operates on the “conceptual” level. Indeed, through such an inquiry into “practical” dimensions of past events and the “concept” or the worldview underlying the former, the complex interplay of meaning and action can be grasped. It is to this second dimension of inquiry that the *Tāj al-Salāṭīn* contributes the most.

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