

## Leadership of Sultan Muhammad Syah II in Terengganu 1918-1920

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### Abstract

This study aims to highlight the leadership of Sultan Muhammad Syah II in administering the state of Terengganu. Sultan Muhammad Syah II was crowned the 12th sultan of Terengganu in November 1918 after his father's death, Al Marhum Sultan Zainal Abidin III. Sultan Muhammad Syah II held the leadership of Terengganu until May 1920. Although less than two years old, Sultan Muhammad Syah II carried out his responsibilities as a ruler to ensure that Terengganu's people and the state were always in peace and prosperity. Therefore, the study will analyze the leadership of Sultan Muhammad Syah II in the Terengganu State Administration in 1918-1920 with a historical approach to data acquisition focused on primary sources such as documents and manuscripts from the British Adviser Terengganu, The Badariah Palace office and the Chief Minister's Office. Secondary sources such as journals and books are also used to reinforce the findings. The study results found that Sultan Muhammad Syah II was a competent leader and full of responsibility in administering the state of Terengganu even though he ruled the state of Terengganu for a short period compared to the previous sultan.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Sultan Muhammad Syah II, Sultan Zainal Abidin III, British, Terengganu

### Introduction

The leadership of the Malay sultanate has produced a government with characteristics such as an empire builder, conqueror, economic builder, and religious and political leader. There is a ruler whose history is remembered, and scholars speak of him as either a just king or a tyrant king. The righteous king will be an example and an example for all time. In contrast, a tyrant king will leave a bad name in the community's memory (Jelani, 2017). Sultan Muhammad Syah II was a leader who defended the people and the state of Terengganu in harmony. Suppose we trace the history of the administration of Sultan Muhammad Syah II. In that case, his name is often associated with the history of his abdication from the throne of the Kingdom of Terengganu and the Terengganu-British agreement of 1919. However, many things can be written and highlighted to be remembered and appreciated by the current generation, especially the leadership throughout His Majesty's administration. This shows

that writing related to the leadership of Sultan Muhammad Syah II needs to be highlighted to the community so that it is not seen from only one angle.

In the context of the leadership of the 12th sultan of Terengganu, Sultan Muhammad Syah II inherited and continued the administration of his father, Sultan Zainal Abidin III, after his death on 25 November 1918 (C.T 16/37). Remembering and appreciating the leadership of the past is not just recalling history and memories of the past but carries the meaning of remembering and appreciating the leadership of the sultan who laid the foundation of the Malay civilization that remains to this day. Indeed, a sultan is a great leader in his own time and place, even the peak of power to all the people under his administration. There is very high respect for the reigning sultan; of course, the sultan must also carry out government fairly and wisely so that the country is in peace and peace (Jelani Harun 2017, xvii). The historians do not write much about the life and leadership of Sultan Muhammad Syah II in the country. Therefore, the author takes the opportunity to explore and trace the history of the leadership of Sultan Muhammad Syah II, who also contributed to the prosperity of the state of Terengganu. Compared to previous leaders, the short period of his reign did not prevent him from carrying out his responsibilities and further developing the community and the state of Terengganu (S.T 16/1338).

#### *Leadership of Sultan Muhammad Shah II*

Sultan Muhammad Syah II's leadership resulted from the traditional upbringing and Islamic upbringing that he received in the environment of life at the Terengganu Palace. Since childhood, Sultan Muhammad Syah II was raised with religious education and worldly knowledge. This is because his father, Al Marhum Sultan Zainal Abidin III, was very concerned about religion in family life, even though all his people followed his orders. What is clear is that during his reign in Terengganu, it was rare to find people who had reached the age of not having finished studying the Quran. Based on the writing of Haji Muhammad Saleh bin Haji Awang (MISBAHA) in his book titled 'Terengganu from The Shape of History to 1918', Al Marhum Sultan Zainal Abidin III's inclination and interest in studying religion prompted him to form a family and subsequently the people and the state based on the Quran and Sunnah. During the reign of Al Marhum Sultan Zainal Abidin III, he appointed his son Tengku Muhammad (Sultan Muhammad Syah II) as Raja Muda, also known by the title Yang Dipertuan Muda (Embong, 2012). Sultan Muhammad Syah II was appointed as Yang Dipertuan Muda and conferred the title Tengku Kechik Muda in 1895 when Tengku Muhammad was six years old (Hashim, 1991).

Referring to the book written by MISBAHA, Sultan Muhammad Shah II was a severe and strict man in all matters, especially those related to religious affairs. The assertiveness possessed by Sultan Muhammad Syah II is a characteristic inherited from his father, Al Marhum Sultan Zainal Abidin III. His upbringing and religious education were emphasized by his father so that Tengku Muhammad would be full of knowledge in his chest to strengthen his leadership and rule the country later. One of Tengku Muda's favorite things is listening to melodious voices. When he was 20 years old in 1909, Tengku Muhammad met Tengku Ngah Aishah Al Marhum Sultan Abdul Rahman, the daughter of the King of Riau.

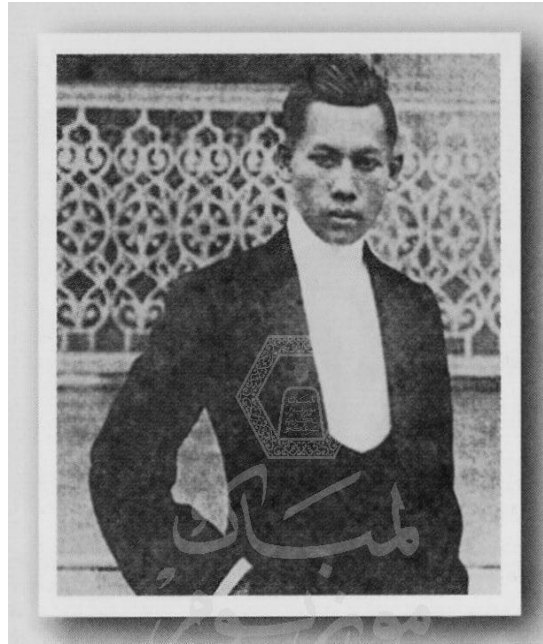


Figure 2. Tengku Muhammad (Sultan Muhammad Syah II) when he was Yam Tuan Muda. The photo was taken in July 1909 when Sir Anderson, the British High Commissioner, visited Terengganu.

Source: Terengganu State Museum Board

Like his father, Al Marhum Sultan Zainal Abidin III, His Majesty Sultan Muhammad Shah II was a sultan who always preserved the people's lives through efficient administration by improving the symbols and practice of Islamic law. Sultan Muhammad Syah II, a sultan who tried to maintain the integrity of the system of Government of the Malay Rulers, was intensely religious and had a close relationship with the scholars in Terengganu. Sultan Muhammad Syah II was a sultan who held the heritage customs of the Malay rulers and the people of Terengganu in high regard. According to Muhammad Salleh Haji Awang (MISBAHA) in writing his Book entitled History of Darul Iman until 1361H=1942m, Sultan Muhammad Syah II was a strong ruler struggling to uphold and defend the independence of Terengganu from being dominated by outsiders.



Figure 3. Sultan Muhammad Syah II.

Source: Terengganu State Museum Board

The leadership of Sultan Muhammad Syah II has its characteristics because of the sources of manuscripts or correspondence related to Sultan Muhammad Syah II. Based on data from primary sources obtained, various information associated with the leadership of Sultan Muhammad Syah II can give an accurate picture to the community today, whether in terms of the contribution or progress of the state of Terengganu implemented by Sultan Muhammad Syah II. What is clear is that the reign of Sultan Muhammad Syah II in less than two years was not an obstacle for Sultan Muhammad Syah II to be appointed as a supreme leader in his time. Throughout the administration of Sultan Muhammad Syah II, His Majesty maintained the sovereignty of the state of Terengganu so that the people would be in peace and security. Sultan Muhammad Syah II has contributed various services to ensure that Terengganu's people and the state are peaceful, politically, economically, and socially (Sulaiman 2021). Based on a relatively limited record of documents and manuscripts relating to the leadership of Sultan Muhammad Syah II, the author can list his contributions to the administration, including the appointment of the Commissioner of Religion and Justice and the Declaration of *Amal Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar*,

#### *Appointment of the Commissioner of Religion and Justice*

The Commissioner of Religion and Justice in the state of Terengganu was continued during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Syah II. Tengku Seri Utama Raja Tengku Ngah Umar bin Abdul Rahim has been appointed Commissioner of Religion and Justice. This position is the highest administrative position in the Terengganu government and is responsible for managing Islamic Religious Affairs. Tengku Seri Utama Raja Tengku Ngah Umar bin Abdul Rahim was accountable to the sultan and briefed the British on Islam. Tengku Seri Utama Raja Tengku Ngah Umar bin Abdul Rahim is assisted by a person who holds the position of Sheikh Islam, mufti, kadi, and nazir of the mosque (Mustajab 2018). During the reign of Sultan Muhammad Syah II, Tengku Ngah Umar bin Abdul Rahim still held this position until 1922. In 1919, during the administration of Sultan Muhammad Shah II, the appointed Sheikh al Islam assisted

Tengku Ngah Umar bin Abdul Rahim as the Commissioner of Religion and Justice, Tuan Embong Syed Abu Bakar bin Abdul Rahman Al-Idrus. The salary received by Tuan Embong Syed Abu Bakar bin Abdul Rahman Al-Idrus as the Sheikh of Islam is \$125.00 per month. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the Companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) were the Companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).



Figure 4. Seated two from the right: Tengku Seri Utama Raja (Tengku Ngah Umar bin Abdul Rahim), the first Commissioner of Religion and Justice. Seated three from the right is Yang Dipertuan Muda Tengku Muhammad Ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Zainal Abidin III  
Source: Terengganu State Museum Board

In the beginning, the British were less interested in matters related to the administration of Islam because it was more focused on politics and economics. Following the British-Terengganu agreement of 1919, its representatives increasingly paid attention to the position of religious offices. Based on the writings of Sarim Hj Mustajab (2018), the appointment of Tuan Embong, the son of Syed Abdul Rahman al-Idrus (Tok Ku Paloh) as the Sheikh of Islam, was on the recommendation of J.L Humphreys Walter, British adviser in Terengganu in 1919. The proposed appointment of Sheikh al-Islam by the British advisers was intended to gain support from the leadership of Sultan Muhammad Shah II. Tuan Embong headed the Terengganu Religious Department in 1913, replacing his father, Tok Ku Paloh. On British glass, Tuan Embong is considered a religious extremist or a pious person who is difficult to match. Syeikhul Islam is a position given to a religious figure who is an expert in Islamic jurisprudence, which previously used the term Syeikhul Ulama (Mustajab, 2018).

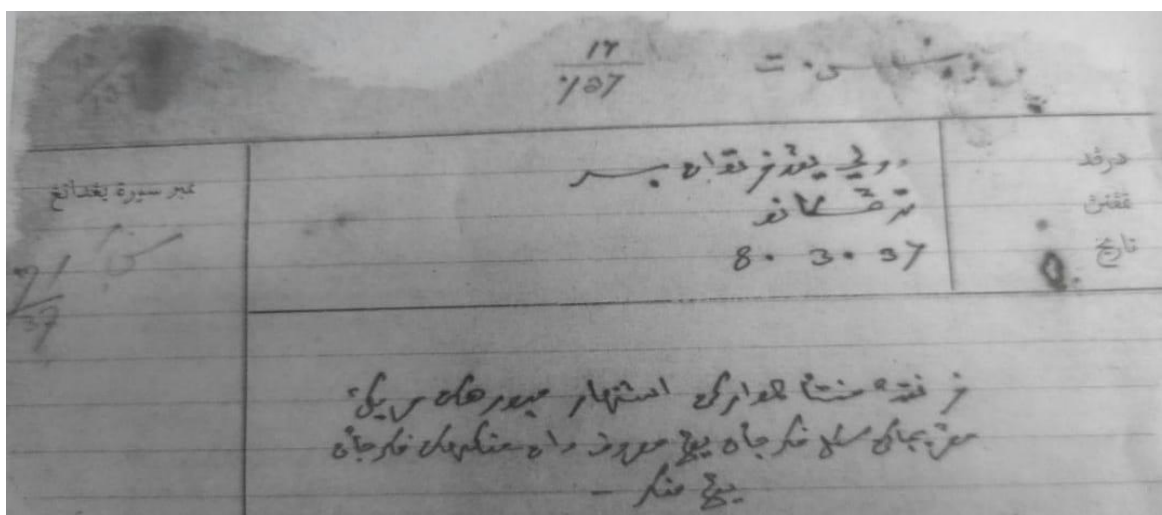
Tengku Ngah Umar had a close relationship with his father, Sultan Muhammad Syah II, not only through blood ties with the palace but also through his marriage to Tengku Nik Maimunah, the second daughter of Al Marhum Sultan Zainal Abidin III and the younger sister of Sultan Muhammad Syah II. Tengku Ngah Umar was seen as a young figure defending the state of Terengganu from being dominated by the British, and from the British glasses at that time, he was anti-British. Tengku Ngah Umar's position as an administrator in charge of Religious Affairs and justice also shows that the Religious Office is a vital administrative institution in the context of the administration of law because it is also related to the judiciary, especially Justice (Sutherland & Mustajab 2018).



Sultan Muhammad Syah II also highlighted the new regulations about collecting zakat, religious instruction, and attending Friday prayers. Tax collection involving mosque officials such as *imam*, *bilal*, and *khatib* has also been conducted to smooth the zakat collection business in Terengganu. Regarding attendance at Friday prayers, the administration also enforces the rules regarding Friday prayers. Therefore, the people are warned with a sentence of imprisonment for seven days, caning twelve times, or being immersed in water for no more than an hour, which is eligible for him if he is found guilty of not performing Friday prayers. If a person is sick, then the illness must be reported to the police, and two men must be the witnesses confirming the report. In connection with the above, an *ittifak* letter or resolution of the meeting was issued to prohibit people from going out to fish on Fridays because working on that day could distract them from performing prayers. Religious education was also not neglected when two religious teachers were appointed, namely Haji Muhammad Ali bin Dato Setia and Abdul Mubin. While two Quranic teachers were appointed: Haji Ali bin Dato Kesum and Haji Wan Ismail Khatib (Mustajab 2018).

#### *The Declaration of Amal Ma'ruf Nahi Mungkar*

The initial stages of the law are more concerned with a circular called a declaration. As far as can be traced and based on the records found, written rules in declarations were first introduced and issued during the reign of Sultan Baginda Omar. His Majesty Omar issued laws in the form of circulars called declarations. It also calls on the people of Terengganu Muslims to conduct the work of Ma'ruf and avoid acts of disobedience. Offenders who commit offenses will be punished. His Majesty Sultan Omar also ensured that all Muslims in Terengganu must perform Friday Fard prayers. However, during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Shah II, a law in the form of the *Amal Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar* declaration was implemented. Sultan Muhammad Syah II issued a declaration reminding all *mukallaf*, men and women, to do good and avoid evil deeds. It is described in the same way as in the Book of Acts of the Babylonian:



File 1. The order to ask them to do *Amal Ma'ruf Nahi Mungkar* (what is wrong and what is right)

Source: National Archives of Malaysia, Terengganu Branch

Based on S.T 17/1337, Sultan Muhammad Shah II ordered that a declaration be issued telling the people to do all the work of Ma'ruf and enforce the wrong work. This is evidenced by a

letter from His Royal Highness Sultan Muhammad Syah II to the Terengganu State Secretary, which reads: *Setiausaha. Kita hendak mengeluarkan perintah amaran di atas sekalian mereka yang mukallaf menyuruhkan mereka mengerjakan segala pekerjaan ma'ruf dan menegahkan mereka daripada mengerjakan segala pekerjaan yang mungkar dalam negeri Terengganu dan sekalian daerah takluknya dengan mengeluarkan isytihar serta memukul canang memberitahu bagaimana adat kerajaan yang telah dijalankan di dalam negeri kita pada masa dahulu (S.T 17/1337).*

The proclamation law was issued in 1918 during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Shah II as follows:

By Order Of His Royal Highness the Yang di-Pertuan Besar al-Sultan Muhammad Ibni al-Marhum Sultan Zainal Abidin of the Kingdom of Terengganu and his Ta'luk.

Know that you men and women who are *mukallaf* should do all things that are right and stay away from all things that are wrong as mentioned below: first, *Hendaklah sekalian kamu bersungguh-sungguh mengerjakan segala pekerjaan yang wajib atas kamu yang diberati oleh syara' dengan mengajar dan belajar iaitu jalan ma'rifah mengenalkan Allah S.W.T dengan aqa'id al-iman yang jadi sah i'tiqad kamu di dalam agama Islam dengan sebenar-benarnya dan mengajar belajar sembahyang dengan segala rukun dan syaratnya serta mengerjakan dia. Demikian juga puasa dan mengeluarkan zakat dan lainnya daripada segala perkara yang difardukan atas kamu. Second, Dan hendaklah sekalian kamu menjauhkan segala pekerjaan yang mungkar, jangan kamu kerjakan iaitu seperti minum arak, berjudi, menyabung dan berkhalwat laki-laki dengan perempuan yang hilat dan lain-lainnya daripada segala perkara yang ditegahkan oleh syara'. Third, Maka barangsiapa yang tidak mengikut sebagaimana amaran suruhan dan tegahan yang tersebut itu, akan dihukumkan kesalahan atas mereka itu dengan ta'zir atau didenda bagaimana yang patut pada timbangan Mahkamah.*

In this declaration, the government under the leadership of Sultan Muhammad Shah II reminded all Muslims to do good and abandon evil deeds. Another reminder emphasized in this declaration is the obligation to teach and learn the knowledge of monotheism that can confirm one's faith and creed. Second, the obligation to teach and learn prayer includes all the pillars and conditions and practice them. Third, the command to perform fast worship, issuing zakat and other *fardu* practices. Fourth, the Prohibition of drinking, gambling, and gambling, and fifth, the Prohibition of abstinence.

Anyone found to have disobeyed or violated this declaration will be arrested and tried in court. Ta'zir or a fine by the court will punish those found guilty. This declaration also gives us the impression that Islamic law continued to be implemented in the state of Terengganu even though, at that time, Terengganu received a substantial threat from the British power to overthrow Sultan Muhammad Syah II. What is clear is that the leadership of Sultan Muhammad Shah II strongly emphasized Islamic law. The personality of Sultan Muhammad Syah II, who prioritized Islamic teachings, indeed had a significant impact on his leadership in administering the state of Terengganu in 1918-1920.

### **Conclusion**

It is clear that the successor of Sultan Zainal Abidin III, Sultan Muhammad Syah II, adheres to the Will and mandate of the leadership to continue the legacy of Islamic leadership inherited from the leadership of his father, Al Marhum Sultan Zainal Abidin III. Sultan Muhammad Syah

He was the 12th Sultan of Terengganu and ruled the Kingdom of Terengganu from 26 November 1918 to 11 May 1920. The short reign of Sultan Muhammad Syah II, which lasted less than two years compared to the previous sultan, did not prevent him from implementing changes and responsibilities as a leader who was concerned with the peace of the state and the welfare of the people. The personality traits possessed by Sultan Muhammad Syah II greatly influenced the leadership of a state in a better direction. Based on the records of the documents found, in less than two years, Sultan Muhammad Syah II had implemented, first, the appointment of the Commissioner of Religion and Justice, and second, the declaration of *amal Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar*. This proves he is a competent leader responsible for administering the state of Terengganu. Thus, the people and the state of Terengganu will be in harmony. Indeed, the history of the struggle of the Malay sultanate of Terengganu needs to be learned and appreciated by the new generation to ensure that Malaysia remains sovereign and independent until the end of time.

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