

THE YANG DI PERTUAN BESAR OF NEGERI SEMBILAN
AND THE YANG DI PERTUAN MUDA OF REMBAU**

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Wanriisan



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The traditional structure of Negeri Sembilan is quite different from those in the other Malay States. The first major difference is that Negeri Sembilan is a matrilineal society. The state was at one time divided into *luak* (traditional territorial unit). The name Negeri Sembilan implies a traditional federation of nine *negeri* (state) or *luak*. At present there are only four major *luak*, viz. Sungai Ujung, Jelebu, Johol and Rembau. The *luak* is under the control of a *Penghulu Luak* also designated as *Undang*. These four *Undang* elect the *Yang Di Pertuan Besar*. Even today, upon them falls the duty and privilege of electing a new *Yang Di Pertuan Besar*¹. They are, therefore, called *Penghulu Berlantek*.

The *Undang* themselves are elected by the *lembaga*. A *lembaga* is the head of a *suku* (clan). Theoretically, the people of Negeri Sembilan and each *luak* are vertically divided into twelve *suku*. A *suku* is formed from related *perut* (sub-clan). The latter is the smallest socio-political unit in Negeri Sembilan and is headed by a *buapak* (mother-father). All the *buapak* of a *suku* elect the *lembaga* for the *suku*, and the *buapak* in turn is elected by the *anak-buah* (member of the clan or clanfolk). Thus, in Negeri Sembilan we find that authority derived from its traditional political constitution has emanated from the people or clanfolk because :

Bulat anak-buah menjadi buapak,
Bulat buapak menjadi lembaga,
Bulat lembaga menjadi penghulu,
Bulat penghulu menjadi raja.

(The *buapak* elected by consensus of the *anak-buah*,
the *lembaga* by consensus of the *buapak*,
the *penghulu* by consensus of the *lembaga*,
the *raja* by consensus of the *penghulu*).

In the above maxim, the last stanza became a reality only in the second-half of the eighteenth century because prior to this period there was no *raja* in Negeri Sembilan. When the word *raja* occurs in the many *perbilang* (traditional sayings or maxims) of Negeri Sembilan before that period, it refers to the ruler of Johore because at that time Negeri Sembilan was subject of Johore :

Beraja ke Johore,
Bertali ke Siak,
Bertuan ke Minangkabau.

(Subject to Johore,
Allied to Siak,
Vessel of Minangkabau).

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¹ Undang-Undang Tubuh Kerajaan Negeri Sembilan 1959, K. Lumpur : Jabatan Cetakan Kerajaan, p. 4.

In the second half of the eighteenth century the Malay-Johore empire was declining because of the rising power of the Bugis. Bugis power was in evidence in 1722 to 1753 and again between 1761 and 1784. Besides, Dutch interference also accentuated the essential weakness of the Negeri Sembilan political system. For this, and other reasons such as the presence of the Dutch in Malacca, their closest neighbour, with whom their relationships can best be described as a state of armed truce there was perpetual tension marked by frequent quarrels. Without a unified government of their own, (as far as we know) split up into a number of matrilineal clans and localized clan-segments, each under its own chieftain², the people of Negeri Sembilan were urged to look towards Minangkabau for a king³. Thus the ties with Johore, their nominal overlords, were broken when Raja Melewar⁴ was installed at Penajis, Rembau in 1773. The relationship with Minangkabau too did not last long because in ca. 1830, it was completely severed⁵. The main reason why the Minangkabau settlers of Negeri Sembilan went to Sumatra to get a raja is still obscure. Maria L.C. Labi has indicated one of the reasons when she says it was :

..... a political manoeuvre by the chiefs of the districts to secure and legitimize certain economic and political advantages which were otherwise difficult to obtain, and to minimize the threat of any potential opposition from foreign elements within Negeri Sembilan itself⁶.

Gullick suggested that it was : "to have a single military defence commander in the wars against the Bugis warriors from Johore and Selangor"⁷.

As pointed above, Raja Melewar, the first raja or Yang Di Pertuan Besar was elected in 1773. But the royal dynasty thus founded had only weak and ill-defined powers and no recognised share of the revenues collected in different parts of the state⁸. There were no known changes in Negeri Sembilan either in its political practices or in its economic activities. The only change was that, in its political structure another luak was added by the creation of a territory somewhere in the

2 De Josselin de Jong, P.E., 1975, 'The Dynastic Myth of Negeri Sembilan (Malaya)', BTL, 131, p. 278.

3 Khoo Kay Kim, 1974, 'Sistem Politik Negeri Sembilan', paper read at the Seminar Persejarah dan Adat Perpatih, Seremban, p. 2.

4 His true name is Raja Mahmud. He was the son of the Yang Di Pertuan Raja Alam Muningshah of Minangkabau. See: Rasjid Manggis, 1971, *Minangkabau Sejarah Ringkas dan Adatnya*, Padang: Penerbit Sridharma, p. 48. The name Melewar was derived from Minangkabau word melawa, meaning "to journey here and there"; Malayianized the name became melawar, melewar, and Anglicised malaywar. This suggests that Raja Melewar was indeed a Minangkabau prince, providing an answer to the queries raised by de Josselin de Jong about the possible Bugis origin of the raja. See de Josselin de Jong, 1975, *ibid*, pp. 277-308.

5 Wilkinson, R.J., 1911, 'Notes on the Negri Sembilan', PMS, repr. ed., K. Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 300.

6 Labi, M.L.C., 1969, 'A Re-Analysis of Negri Sembilan Socio-political Organization', JMBRAS, 42(2), p. 148. This article was reviewed by Hooker, M.B., 1971, in JMBRAS, 44(1), pp. 104-116.

7 Gullick, J.M., 1958, *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya*, London: The Athlone Press, repr. ed. 1969, p. 19.

8 Chelliah, T., 1955, *War in Negri Sembilan 1874-1875*, B.A. dissertation ms., University of Singapore, p. 5.

centre of the present Negeri Sembilan known as tanah mengandung⁹. As to the outer ring of Negeri Sembilan, viz., luak of Sungei Ujung, Jelebu, Johol and Rembau, the new Yang Di Pertuan Besar was powerless in both their internal and external affairs. In other words "he was not to interfere in the affairs of the four larger districts of Negeri Sembilan". This also applied to most of his successors. It thus happened that the chiefs continued to quarrel with each other and also with the royal dynasty¹⁰. In fact by his election and that of his successors, another type of conflict was added to the already turbulent political pattern of Negeri Sembilan, i.e. succession disputes. This turbulence went on until the 1870s.

Historical incidents tell us that as far as the external and internal affairs of Negeri Sembilan were concerned, the Yang Di Pertuan Besar was powerless. For example, in the luak of Rembau, the Undang could sign any treaty with any foreign power without the prior knowledge of the Yang Di Pertuan Besar as long as the former's signature was countersigned by his council of lembaga¹¹. Almost all the treaties signed by Rembau, which were principally of a friendly and commercial character¹² with other foreign powers between 1773 and 1832 were not countersigned by the Yang Di Pertuan Besar. Furthermore, in the mid-nineteenth century the increasing commercial activities particularly in the export of tin had become a new factor of conflict in Negeri Sembilan especially in those states along the Linggi River where sustained commercial activities first developed. This brought about a chain of political reactions as territorial chiefs viz., Rembau, Sungai Ujung and Linggi vied for a substantial share of the available revenue. Rivalry, apart from other vested interests, was equally intense¹³. Thus for nearly forty years (1830-1870) the history of Linggi and the states of Sungai Ujung and Rembau was one of intermittent struggle for the profits of the river traffic in tin. Each chief sought to obtain control of the tin revenues¹⁴. The Yang Di Pertuan Besar, although supposed to be the 'fountain of justice' and 'final court of appeal'¹⁵, never interfered or at least never used his power, to settle the conflict. And in this matter then the Straits Governor wrote :

..... the late Eang de per Tuan [Raja Radin] who was also the Penghooloo of Sre Menante, exercised but little influence over the other Chiefs, his position indeed seems never to have been recognised by the British Government all correspondence with various Chieftains having been conducted without any reference to this authority. ¹⁶

9 Shppard, M., 1965, *A Short History of Negeri Sembilan*. Singapore : Eastern University Press, p. 16.

10 Chelliah, 1955, *ibid.* p. 5.

11 Hervey, D.F.A., 1884, 'Rembau' JSBRAS, 13, p. 255; see also *Corpus Diplomaticum Nerlando-Indicum*, 6 Vols., BTL, 57 onwards, and Maxwell, W.G., and Gibson, W.S., 1924, *Treaties and Engagements affecting the Malay States and Borneo*, London: Truscott and Son Ltd.

12 Newbold, T.J., 1839, *British Settlements in the Straits of Malacca*, Vol. 2, London: John Murray, p. 79.

13 Khoo Kay Kim, 1972, *The Western Malay States, 1850-1873*, K. Lumpur: Oxford University Press, p. 118.

14 Chelliah, 1955, *op. cit.* p. 7.

15 Wilkinson, 1911, *op. cit.* pp. 312-313.

16 SSR, R40, Singapore to Fort William, 16 May, 1861. Quoted by Khoo Kay Kim, 1972, *op. cit.* p. 121. bold are mine.

This clearly shows the **Yang Di Pertuan Besar's** weak position and authority in the external relations and commercial aspects of the states.

What then was the idea behind the invitation to and the election of the first **Yang Di Pertuan Besar** in 1773 ?

In fact, Negeri Sembilan was a *rantau* (colony) of Minangkabau¹⁷. As a *rantau* and following the accepted tradition of other Minangkabau *rantau*¹⁸, the traditional adat constitution of Negeri Sembilan demanded that it had a raja. But his position and power according to the same constitution was confined to the role, as stated earlier, of being the fountain of justice and the final court of appeal. i.e. 'to act as judge and arbiter', which again was naive. This leaves us only with the explanation that the reason for installing the **Yang Di Pertuan Besar** was to minimize the threat of foreign elements already there¹⁹. This sounds eminently sensible especially in view of the fact that a local choice was not possible because of the status of legal equality which existed between the **Undang**. There was nothing in the adat itself to allow for the elevation of an **Undang**. And the foreign element that impelled the coming of the **Yang Di Pertuan Besar** in this case was the Bugis.

The Bugis came to the Malay Peninsula in the late seventeenth century. The Dutch **Dagh-Register** proved that by 1681 there were already large Bugis Settlements in the Peninsula²⁰. They were slowly and steadily gaining power in Johore. By 1722 one of the Bugis princes got himself appointed the **Yang Di Pertuan Muda** of Johore-Riau' empire²¹. In 1750 relations between Raja Sulaiman of Johore and the Bugis **Yang Di Pertuan Muda**, Daeng Kemboja came to such a pass that the Bugis princes abandoned the capital at Riau and established themselves at Linggi²². And in 1756 from time to time Daeng Kemboja moved to Pedas (Rembau) from Linggi. The presence of Daeng Kemboja and his followers in Linggi and Pedas in particular was a threat to the Minangkabau Malays of Negeri Sembilan. Between the Bugis and the Sumatran Malays there was a long tradition of hostility which was exacerbated by the difference in their mother's side which was considered incestuous among the Minangkabau communities and punishable by death²³. The Bugis tried their best to exert their influence in Negeri Sembilan and Rembau in particular. On one occasion, early in 1760, Daeng Kemboja tried to match his relative, Raja Jalil, with the daughter of Undang of Rembau, but as was expected, his approach was rejected.

About the middle of 1760 Raja Sulaiman of Johore died. Daeng Kemboja and his Bugis followers went back to Riau, where he became the **Yang Di Pertuan Muda**. This was a relief to the **Undang** of Rembau. Yet, by the 1770s they invited the Minangkabau prince from Pagarrayung. This can be understood. Although Daeng Kemboja had left Rembau, the Bugis influence was still a powerful element to be dealt with. Until his death in 1777 Daeng Kemboja was the **Yang Di Pertuan Muda** of the Johore-Riau empire and de facto ruler of the empire. All the while,

17 To the Minangkabau people *tanah Rembau* means Negeri Sembilan as a whole: See Rasjid Manggis, 1971, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

18 Rasjid Manggis, 1971, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

19 Labi, 1969, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

20 Winstedt, R.O., 1962, *A History of Malaya*, Singapore: Marican and Sons. p. 144.

21 *ibid.* p. 144.

22 Gullick, J.M., 1949, 'Sungei Ujong', *JMBRAS*, 22(2). p. 58.

23 Hooker, M.B., 1970, *Land Tenure, Traditional Government and Religion in Modern Malaya*, Ph. D. thesis. ms., Australian National University. p. 11.

Raja Haji the famous Bugis prince paid periodic visits to Rembau. At the same time a Bugis prince, Raja Adil, was already stationed in Rembau (this will be discussed later). Being subject to Bugis pressure, either directly or indirectly, and coupled by the fact that Rembau (Negeri Sembilan) was a rantau of Minangkabau, like other Minangkabau rantau such as Siak and Indrapura, Negeri Sembilan had to have a raja, who usually was a descendent of the Raja of Pagarruyung. Rembau and the other Minangkabau states of Negeri Sembilan, therefore, invited Raja Melewar to fulfill this role²⁴. It must be remembered that although Raja Melewar was the first to be installed as Yang Di Pertuan Besar, there had been other Minangkabau princes invited to Negeri Sembilan before him reference to which will be made later.

Dutch records tell us in 1756, 1764 and 1779 there were present in Malacca two chiefs who came to negotiate a treaty on behalf of Rembau. One of them was the ruling **Datuk**, **Datuk Linsoh** and the other was **Raja Adil**²⁵. If there was already a raja in Rembau in those years, why then was Raja Melewar invited? The **Aturan Sungei Ujong** edited by Bland²⁶ mentioned a Raja Adil. He was a prince from Minangkabau invited by the four **Undang** of Negeri Sembilan in the 1730s. Is this Raja Adil the same man mentioned by the Dutch records of 1756, 1764 and 1779?

The Raja Adil of the **Aturan Sungei Ujong** came from Minangkabau after Raja Kasah, another prince of Minangkabau, who came in 1722²⁷. But Raja Adil was rejected by the four **Undang** because 'he was unable to revise the custom of the country (Adat Perpatih)'²⁸. If this was the case, then Raja Adil of the Dutch records could not have been the same person who visited Malacca. Furthermore, since the Raja Adil of **Aturan Sungei Ujong** was not acceptable to the **Undang** of Rembau he would not have been given authority to negotiate a treaty on behalf of Rembau with a foreign power. Rembau until today is still believed to be 'the stronghold of the **Adat Perpatih** and it is in Rembau that the adat is still supreme'²⁹. And we have to remember that the **Undang** of Rembau was one of those who invited Raja Adil and who was among those who rejected him.

Who then was Raja Adil of the Dutch records? According to Parr and Mackray there was a Raja Adil in Rembau in 1750s³⁰. He was the representative of the Sultan of Johore in Rembau and most probably for the whole of Negeri Sembilan. His function was to advise the **Undang** on state matters on behalf of the Sultan. The Sultan of Johore was quite an important figure in the history of Rembau. In 1540, it was to the Sultan of Johore the Minangkabau settlers of Rembau went to obtain consent on the election of their first **Undang**, **Datuk Lela Maharaja Sri Rama**. Then, later in that year, when petty jealousy sprang up between the two leaders of the Minangkabau's settlers of Rembau on the question of the **Undang's** office,

24 Hooker, M.B., 1971, 'The Early Adat Constitution of Negeri Sembilan', **JMBRAS**, 44(1), p. 105. The other Minangkabau states were Sungei Ujung, Johol and Ulu Muar. Jelabu, according to Hooker, 1971, *ibid.* was not a party to the invitation.

25 Wilkinson, 1911, *op. cit.* p. 298.

26 Bland, 1895, *op. cit.*

27 Wilkinson, 1911, *op. cit.* p. 295

28 Bland, 1895, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

29 A Staff Writer, 1970, 'A look at West Malaysia's Matriarchal Society where the women control property', **The Straits Times**, December, 7, K. Lumpur, p. 12. However, the truth of this statement has been discussed by Norhalim Ibrahim, 1976, **Social Change and Continuity in the Matriineal Society of Rembau, Negeri Sembilan**, M.A. thesis MS, University of Hull. See also, Norhalim Hj. Ibrahim, 'Social Change in Rembau', **JMBRAS**, 50 (2) 1977, pp. 136-149.

30 Parr, C.W.C. and Mackray, W.H., 1910, 'Rembau, one of the Nine States', **JSBRAS**, 56.

they again took the matter to the Sultan of Johore for settlement³¹. But as time went by, and the Minangkabau settlers 'prospered and multiplied and waxed proud and arrogant [they] ceased to render obeisance to Johore'³², Johore was losing her influence and control over Rembau especially in the mid-seventeenth century (the 1640s) when there was a direct confrontation between Rembau and Naning and the Dutch in Malacca. It was during these troubled years that the Sultan of Johore nominated his first representative, Datuk Ganti Maharaja, the lembaga of suku Anak Melaka³³, in Rembau. However, no event is recorded to show that Datuk Ganti Maharaja (lit: the chief who represents the king) really displayed or exercised his "ambassadorial" authority most probably because he was a local man and his loyalty was more to the state (Rembau and the Undang) rather than to the Sultan of Johore. Then, in about the 1720s we see Datuk Shahbandar acting as Johore's representative and he too was a local lembaga (lembaga of suku Biduanda). Like as his predecessor he never exercised his authority as the representative of the Sultan. The apparent Johore influence, specially in the creation of minor territorial offices (as stated above³¹) was designed to influence the weight of support for one or other of the competing claimants of the office of Undang of Rembau which was subject to inter-clan dispute at various periods. Rembau was racked by civil war over succession until well into the nineteenth century. Despite the use of this 'resident system'³³, Johore control over Rembau and other parts of Negeri Sembilan was weak. Johore, as stated earlier, was herself declining. Thus, by the 1760s 1670s we find Raja Ibrahim in Rembau³⁶ and in 1722, Raja Kasah came and in the 1730s Raja Adil. All these raja were never elected as the Yang Di Pertuan Besar. Raja Ibrahim was murdered by a Bugis slave in 1679, and Raja Kasah and Raja Adil went back to Minangkabau because they were unable to introduce the laws of the Minangkabau desired by the four Undang. By the coming of these raja even temporarily, Johore saw herself in danger of losing Negeri Sembilan, and Rembau in particular. Since all her former representatives were local people, in the 1750s she sent an outsider and a raja instead, in the hope that the Minangkabau would elect him the raja of Negeri Sembilan or, at least, in the expectation that he would guarantee Johore's control over Rembau. Johore never really recognised the independence of the Negeri Sembilan. Even in 1866 the raja of Johore, then designated Maharaja, wanted for some time to bring this part of the Malay world into his own sphere of influence³⁷. In the 1870s the Maharaja Abu Bakar of Johore, encouraged by the British, endeavoured to play a part in the Negeri Sembilan affairs³⁸. According to Syed Hamid's (the Tengku Besar of Tampin) statement to Hervey in 1883 the Maharaja had most of Negeri Sembilan chiefs in his pay. To strengthen his influence the Maharaja stationed in southern Negeri Sembilan detachments of his place to support the local representatives³⁹. But his ambitions were never fulfilled because Weld (Governor of the Straits Settlements) stopped him⁴⁰. However, the Maharaja was used by both Anson and Weld as mediator

31 Parr and Mackray, 1910, op. cit., p. 4.

32 Winstedt, R.O., 1934, 'History of Negeri Sembilan', JMBRAS, 12(3), p p. 53

33 Parr and Mackray, 1910, op. cit., p. 15.

34 Two other offices created were Datuk Menteri Lela Perkasa and Datuk Mangkubumi.

35 Parr and Mackray, 1910, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

36 Bremner, M.J. (tr.), 1927, 'Report of Governor Balthasar Bort on Malacca 1678', JMBRAS, 5(1), pp. 70-71.

37 Wilkinson, 1911, op. cit., p. 308; Winstedt, 1934, op. cit., p. 73.

38 Thio, E., 1969, *British Policy in the Malay Peninsula 1880-1910*, Vol. 1. Singapore: University of Malaya Press, pp. xxvi, 10.

39 Gullick, J.M., 1976, 'The Tampin Succession', JMBRAS, 49(2), p. 8.

40 Wilkinson, 1911, op. cit., p. 308.

(only) in the Negeri Sembilan states of Rembau and Sri Menanti until mid-1880s⁴¹

In the eighteenth century, the raja's hope might have been fulfilled if he had been more particular in his choice. Instead of sending a really neutral raja, he sent Raja Adil who was a Bugis⁴². His 'choice' of a Bugis can be understood because during those years, the Bugis were the real power behind the raja.

When Raja Adil arrived with his seal⁴³ he was placed in Pedas, Upper Rembau⁴⁴. The choice of placing him in Upper Rembau was deliberate on the part of the Undang and his council of lembaga of Lower Rembau. These lembaga of Lower Rembau, the powerful council of the Undang, would not have him in Lower Rembau because there was already an orang besar adat (an adat chief), that is, the Undang. In Upper Rembau there was no orang besar. It has to be remembered that before 1831, the four lembaga of Upper Rembau were not included in the council of lembaga (lembaga tiang balai) of the Undang. Prior to that date the lembaga of Upper Rembau and the lembaga of Lower Rembau met on no common ground⁴⁵. Because in the 1750s there were two orang besar (the Undang and Raja Adil) in Rembau, they placed Raja Adil in Upper Rembau.

In 1756 Daeng Kemboja arrived in Pedas at the house of Raja Adil, after being driven out of Linggi by the Dutch⁴⁶. Daeng Kemboja's decision to come to Pedas can be explained by the fact that Raja Adil was the Bugis choice to be Johore's representative in Rembau. Thus, it seems a reasonable inference that Raja Adil's role was to serve as a link between Daeng Kemboja and the Rembauans. According to the *Tuhfal Al-Nafis* written by the Bugis historian Raja Ali Haji the reason of his coming to Rembau was to seek help from the Undang and the four lembaga of Rembau⁴⁷. Instead, Daeng Kemboja could have retired to Klang and Selangor. The ruler of Selangor was a Bugis and related to Daeng Kemboja. But Klang and Selangor (at this period Selangor had yet to emerge as a recognised Malay state) was too far from one of the Bugis's main base, that is, the estuary of the Linggi⁴⁸. Even Sungei Ujong, whose penghulu acquired the Bugis title of "Datuk Kelana" was too far from Linggi for the sometimes hard pressed Bugis force against the Dutch at Linggi. Thus, Rembau, whose main river, the Penajis, joined the Linggi a few miles upstream from the Straits of Malacca was chosen as a place to withdraw to. For this purpose Daeng Kemboja and later Raja Ali Haji would need a "man on the spot" in Rembau to act as his eyes and ears on occasions to bring out Malay levies in support of the Bugis. In territorial terms the Bugis coastal fort (Linggi) needed a secure allied zone along the coast (in this case Rembau) in which the Malay population could be coerced or persuaded to support them.

The Undang of Rembau had no alternative but to oblige him. A joint Bugis-Rembau attack on the Dutch at Malacca was launched in October 1756. But they failed to capture Malacca and were defeated in May 1757. It was due to this

41 See treaties of 1876 and 1887. Maxwell and Gibson. 1924. op. cit., pp.

42 Winstedt, 1962. op. cit., p. 156.

43 Wilkinson. 1911. op. cit., p. 298.

44 According to the Adat Constitution Rembau was divided into two — Rembau Baroh (Lower Rembau) and Rembau Darat (Upper Rembau).

45 Parr and Mackray, 1910. op. cit., p. 42.

46 Winstedt, R.O., 1932, 'A History of Johore', *JMBRAS*, 10(1), pp. 13-14.

47 Raja Ali Haji, (nd.), 'Tuhfal Al-Nafis', *JMBRAS*, 10(2), 1932, p. 94.

48 Bugis power was seaborne and mobile and it had need of land bases even if these were only temporary. One such area of Bugis power was the estuary of the Linggi river, which in the 1750s was Daeng Kemboja's main base.

event that they went to Malacca to negotiate a treaty as recorded by the Dutch which tell us that there were present in Malacca two chiefs to negotiate on behalf of Rembau.

Raja Adil was Johore's representative and a supporter of Daeng Kemboja. According to the adat constitution of Rembau, he and even the Undang without the lembaga's consent had no right to negotiate a treaty with any power. Thus they returned without affecting anything⁴⁹. As mentioned earlier, a treaty signed by the Undang of Rembau was not binding on the State if it lacked the counter signatures of the lembaga of Rembau. However, in January 1758, Raja Adil did sign a treaty on behalf of Rembau at Fort Filipina, Linggi⁵⁰. But, as far as Rembau was concerned, this treaty was not binding; thus in 1756, the Undang and the lembaga were in Malacca to renegotiate this treaty.

On the death of Raja Sulaiman, Daeng Kemboja returned to Riau in 1760 to be the Yang Di Pertuan Muda. Raja Adil remained in Rembau⁵¹ and tried to bid for the office of the Yang Di Pertuan Besar of Sri Menanti on the death of Raja Melewar in 1795 but failed⁵². He then claimed the Bugis title of Yang Di Pertuan Muda of Rembau and was rejected by the Undang and the lembaga. However, had Raja Adil claimed the title of Yang Di Pertuan Muda before 1795 the Undang and the Lembaga might have been forced to consent because at that time he had the backing and support of the Bugis forces. But as it was, Raja Adil no longer had the backing and support of the Bugis. Bugis power declined after the death and defeat of Raja Haji, successor of Daeng Kemboja, in 1784. The Bugis had withdrawn and concentrated their forces to the north and south in the new state of Selangor and in Johore. The recession of the Bugis tide must have left Raja Adil in a somewhat isolated and exposed position in Rembau, Raja Adil had therefore to come to terms with the Rembau Malays.

Raja Adil died in 1798. His seals, however, were taken over by his son, Raja Asil. Raja Asil, in 1798, created for himself the title of Yang Di Pertuan Muda of Rembau which his father had claimed and sometimes exercised but never held officially or legally. In this case, Raja Asil's position was different from that of his father's. As far as the record reveal, Raja Asil never tried to bid for the title of Yang Di Pertuan Besar of Sri Menanti.

Raja Melewar, the first official Yang Di Pertuan Besar brought over from Sumatra in 1773 died in 1795 and was replaced by Raja Hitam, a prince from Minangkabau. To secure peace with Raja Adil's family he married one of the former's daughters, Raja Sulong who had recently been widowed. Raja Sulong could not be his consort because she was an anak bena (a child begotten from a commoner). Nevertheless, it was a marriage of convenience. Raja Hitam became the brother-in-law of Raja Asil. Using Raja Hitam's status and influence, Raja Asil managed to create and secure recognition on the title in Rembau — the Yang Di Pertuan Muda, some time in the period 1800-1805 A.D. According to Gullick the title was conferred on Raja Asil by Raja Hitam⁵³.

49 Parr and Mackray, 1010, op. cit., p. 16.

50 Winstedt, 1962, op. cit., p. 147.

51 Sheppard, 1965, op. cit., p. 11.

52 There is a strong Rembau tradition (found in Parr and Mackray, Begbie, Newbold and Hervey) that Raja Adil was elected the second Yang Di Pertuan Besar. But Wilkinson denies it. However, it may be that the interregnum between the death of Raja Melewar and the arrival of his acknowledge successor, Raja Hitam, from Sumatra, Raja Adil was formally or otherwise, the Regent as being the senior raja remaining.

53 Gillick, 1976, op. cit., p. 24.

When Raja Asil became the Yang Di Pertuan Muda he took the title of Sultan Muhammad Shah, Yang Di Pertuan Muda Rembau⁵⁴. The Undang and the lembaga of Rembau, for some reason or other, after rejecting Raja Asil's father's (Raja Adil) claim for the title, were forced to accept him. However, though they recognised him as Yang Di Pertuan Muda, he was not given any power. The creation of this office did not in any way affect the adat constitution of Rembau. This power was still in the hands of the Undang and lembaga. No new office or new lembaga was created to look after or to protect the Yang Di Pertuan Muda such as was done in Jelebu when they created the office of the Yang Di Pertuan Muda of Jelebu⁵⁵, who incidentally was the half-brother of Raja Asil.

In Jelebu, when the Undang, waris⁵⁶ and the lembaga created the office, a lembaga, called Datuk Lela Angsa was appointed to protect the Yang Di Pertuan Muda. The Undang himself when he wished to have an audience with the Yang Di Pertuan Muda, applied to do so to the Datuk Menteri who laid the request before the Datuk Lela Angsa. Beside the office of Datuk Lela Angsa, four more offices were created. These four were attached to the Yang Di Pertuan Muda's household, viz., Datuk Bruang Sakti, Datuk Panglima Perang, Datuk Panglima Mamat, and Datuk Panglima Perang Dua⁵⁷. But this was not the case in Rembau. By the election of the Yang Di Pertuan Muda, the Undang and the lembaga of Rembau had to part with some of their sources of income. Control over Tampin and Kru was given to the new Yang Di Pertuan Muda to maintain himself⁵⁸. Of all the lembaga, Datuk Shahbandar was the one to lose most because he had to give up one of his main sources of income, that is, one-third of the duty levied on tin passing down Linggi River from Sungei Ujong⁵⁹. In all other respects, Raja Asil was just like the Yang Di Pertuan Besar of Sri Menanti, that is, he had no regalia, neither had he any people or territory of his own. He was powerless and helpless⁶⁰.

54 Wilkinson, 1911, op. cit., p. 298.

55 According to Caldecott, A., 1912, 'Jelebu, Its History and Constitution' PMS, 2nd Series, p. 20, it was the people who "sought a scion of the royal line to come and dwell among them". The Penghulu (Undang) of Jelebu at that time (ca. 1820) was probably Durongga or "madman". His lunacy may have drive the lembaga and waris "to meet altogether and notify to the Penghulu their intention of making [Raja] Sabun supreme ruler, because his behaviour towards the people was good, and he seemed a man capable of supporting and sustaining the country; and because he was also of considerable mental ability and his personal character was beyond reproach". See O'Brian, H.A. 1934, 'Jelebu', JSBRAS, 14, p. 338.

56 The term waris in Jelebu is applied in two different senses: (1) the inheritors of the undangship of waris berundang (they are Waris Ulu Jelebu, Waris Sarin and Waris Kumun), (2) the inheritors of the country or waris negeri (they are Waris Menteri and Waris Ombi).

57 O'Brian, 1884, op. cit., p. 341. But in the reign of the last Yang Di Pertuan Muda, Raja Abdullah (ca. 1882-1884 — deceased 13th December 1884) these four officers no longer exist.

58 Khoo Kay Kim, 1972, op. cit., p. 27.

59 Newbold, 1839, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

60 Braddell, T., 1856, 'Extracts from a letter from S. Garling, Esq.'. JIA, Vol. 1, New Series, p. 221.

Here again, the Yang Di Pertuan Muda of Rembau differed in some ways from the Yang Di Pertuan Muda of Jelebu. The Yang Di Pertuan Muda of Jelebu had a territory because according to O'Brian :

The district within which the Yam Tuan's [of Jelebu] authority extended was from Bandar Berangan up to Sungei Melentang, that is, to say, to Batu Gomintang (in other word a portion of what is now Klawang).⁶¹

The Yang Di Pertuan Muda of Rembau, though he had Tampin and Kru for his maintenance, yet had no authority over these areas. Authority was still in the hands of the respective lembaga⁶². It was possible to give him Tampin and Kru because his mother, Cik Nenek was a member of the suku Tiga Nenek of Tampin⁶³. Furthermore, these two offices, Rembau and Jelebu, were different in another way. In Jelebu the office was created by and on the initiative of the Undang, waris and the lembaga themselves⁶⁴, but in Rembau, as we have seen above, the Undang and the lembaga were forced to accept its creation to avoid unnecessary trouble⁶⁵. Thus, Raja Asil is position as Yang Di Pertuan Muda of Rembau was by its nature insecure.

The idea of the Undang and the lembaga trying to avoid unnecessary trouble was not practical and did not work when Raja Asil and his successor, Raja Ali had established themselves. Raja Asil, however, was deposed in 1812 by his grand-nephew, Raja Ali, who had been aiming for the post. His first attempt to dislodge Raja Asil, however, did not bear fruit and he retired temporarily to Sungei Nipah, near Tanjung Tuan (Cape Rechado). His next chance came when Raja Asil's son, Raja Haji carried off by force a woman of the family of the Undang after the Undang had refused his consent to their marriage on the ground of it being unlawful⁶⁶.

The Undang's refusal could be understood. The male offsprings of this union were a possible source of trouble as they were potential claimants to their father's royal position by paternal descent and potential claimants to the Undang/lembaga office by maternal descent. Candidates with these dual connections were a threat to stability on both sides.

61 O'Brian, 1884, op. cit., p. 339. However ideally, according to the Jelebu constitution, the Yang Di Pertuan Muda was merely a figurehead, a 'great snake' to be fed by the Penghulu. Even in exercising his major function as 'fountain of justice' he had to refer to the undang and lembaga. Moreover, the Yang Di Pertuan Muda could not bypass the lembaga and make direct arrangements with members of any suku. Nor could he alter or initiate policy without obtaining the consent of the territorial and clan chiefs. See, Thio, 1969, op. cit., p. 44.

62 Wilkonson, 1911, op. cit., pp. 31-3 mentions two waris suku: suku Batu Hampar and Mungkal respectively, as being found in both areas. This list is not quite accurate today; recent field work results shows that the waris suku are Biduanda (Tampin) and Tiga Batu (Kru), see Hooker, M.B., 1972, *Adat Laws in Modern Malaysia*, K. Lumpur, Oxford University Press, p. 199. The later list is confirmed by Abdul Samad Idris (ed.), 1968, *Negeri Sembilan dan Sejarahnya*, K. Lumpur, Utusan Melayu Bhd., pp. 232-3, except that he does not give the name of the waris suku for Kru.

63 Khoo Kay Kim, 1972, op. cit., p. 27. The suku in Tampin are Biduanda, Batu Belang, Sri Melenggang and Tiga Batu. Their lembaga are Menteri, Memperang, Kaya Menteri and Paduka Menteri, respectively. See Hooker, 1972, *ibid.*, p. 201.

64 O'Brian, 1884, op. cit., p. 338; Caldecott, 1912, op. cit., p. 20.

65 KhooKayKim, 1972, op. cit., p. 27.

66 Newbold, T.J., 1834, 'Sketch of the Four Menangkabows States in the interior of the Malayan Peninsula', Moor, J.H., (ed.), 1837, *Notices of the Indian Archipelago*, Singapore, rep. ed. London: Frank Cass, 1968, p. 257.

War was declared on the **Yang Di Pertuan Muda's** family. The **Undang** and the **lembaga** requested the co-operation of Raja Ali who came eagerly, accompanied and supported by the **Datuk Muda** of Linggi⁶⁷. Raja Ali became the titular spokesman of the Rembau chiefs. He persuaded Raja Asil and his family that the wisest course was for them to withdraw from Rembau until the furor had died down. Raja Asil retreated to Naning (1813) and eventually to Malacca (1814) and later died at Naning. Raja Ali, in Asil's absence, secured his own succession to the office of **Yang Di Pertuan Muda** and accordingly was elected.

According to Newbold, Raja Ali was "dark in complexion of a forbidding and ferocious aspect" besides being "grossly ignorant and superstitious"⁶⁸. His mother, Raja Puteh, had a considerable influence over him. Such being the case it was not surprising that he was persuaded, perhaps unwisely, to aim for the post of **Yang Di Pertuan Muda** of Rembau. Besides, we have to remember that his father was a Bugis, Raja Aman, brother of the Sultan of Selangor⁶⁹. Being half-Bugis his position in Rembau was also insecure. We believe that it was Raja Puteh who motivated her son to seek for the post. She did not try to place Raja Ali as the **Yang Di Pertuan Muda** of Rembau in 1798 because he was too young. He was then about 16 years old. Another factor that helped him in 1812/13 was that he was on good terms with the Sri Menanti family in that Raja Lenggeng Laut, who came from Minangkabau after the death of Raja Hitam, was his brother-in-law⁷⁰.

At first, Raja Ali moved with great deliberation, making no enemies. But once he gained confidence and got himself established he arrogated to himself powers of interference in the government of Rembau. The essence of Raja Ali's method of government was to play off the **Undang** against the **lembaga**. First, in 1819 he interfered with the election of the new **Undang** of Rembau after the death of **Datuk Sedia Raja Bogok** (1812-1819) by electing a man, **Pakat**, of his own choice; on the other hand, the **lembaga** choose **Nganit**, splitting the office of **Undang** between two incumbents. Thus Rembau, for some years had two **Undang**. Officially, **Datuk Lela Maharaja Nganit** was the **Undang**. Then in 1824 Raja Ali bid strongly for the office of **Yang Di Pertuan Besar** on the death of his brother-in-law Raja Lenggeng laut⁷¹. This act was against the traditional constitution of Negeri Sembilan. According to the adat constitution a new **Yang Di Pertuan Besar** was to come over from Minangkabau bringing credentials from the Raja of Minangkabau and a letter from the chief of Siak. By bidding for this post, he was embroiling Rembau in the succession war which had already bloomed in Sri Menanti beside giving offence to every chief in Negeri Sembilan.

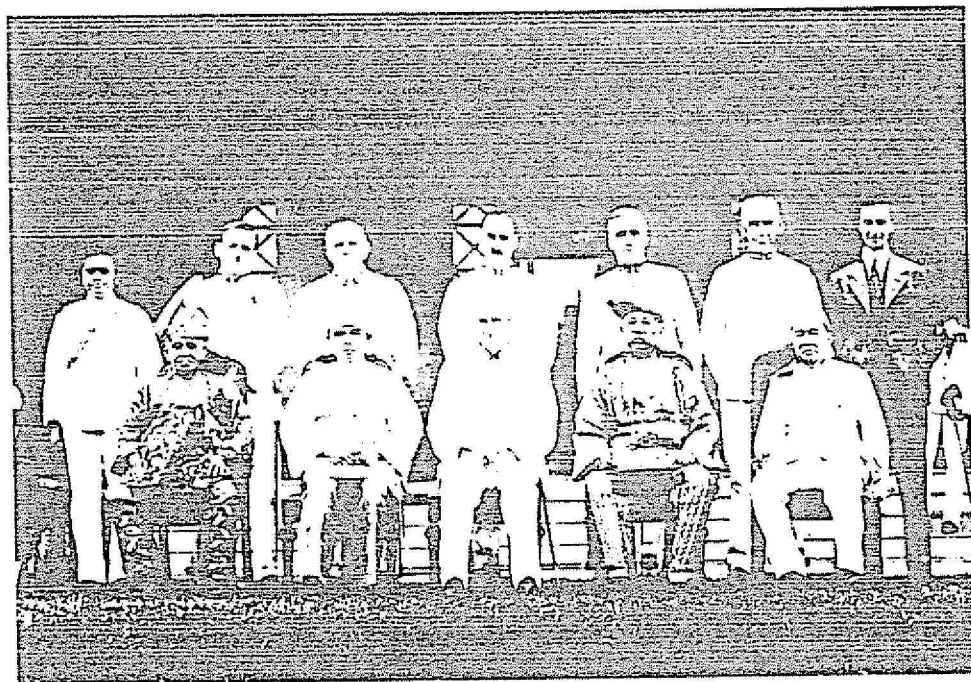
67 *ibid.*

68 *ibid.*

69 *ibid.*

70 Wilkinson, 1911, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

71 There were two reasons for Raja Ali's concern. First as **Yang Di Pertuan Muda** he could, like Raja Adil before him, be a candidate for the vacant office of **Yang Di Pertuan Besar**. Secondly, if he himself could not succeed in this ambition he was interested in defeating another contender, Raja Laboh (Yam Tuan Sati) whose wife (daughter of Raja Asli) was his inveterate enemy on account of his usurption of Raja Asil's office.



Barisan hadapan (kiri ke kanan): Sultan Abdullah, K. C. M. G. Ibni Almarhum Sultan Ahmad, Pahang; Sultan Iskandar Shah K. C. M. G., K. C. V. O. Ibni Almarhum Sultan Idris, Perak; Tuan Sir Cecil Clementi, K. C. M. G. Persuruhjaya Tinggi Persekutuan; Tuanku Muhamad, G. C. M. G., K. C. V. O. ibni Yam Tuan Antah, Negeri Sembilan; Sultan Sulaiman Shah G. C. M. G. ibni Almarhum Raja Muda Musa, Selangor.

Barisan Belakang (kiri ke kanan): Raja Uda b. Raja Muhamad, Edikong kepada Pesuruhjaya; Tuan H. G. R. Leonard, Resident British, Pahang; Tuan BW. Ellis Resident British Perak; Tuan A. Coldecott, C. B. E. Pemangku Ketua Setiausaha Kerajaan Persekutuan; Tuan J. W. W. Hoghes, Pemangku Resident British, Selangor; Tuan J. S. Macpherson, Pemangku Pegawai Daerah, Kuala Pilah, Setiausaha kepada Durbar, diadakan di Istana Besar, Sri Menanti.

Furthermore, in 1831 he supported popular demands for four more *lembaga* to represent Upper Rembau (Rembau Darat) in the council of *lembaga*. In the original adat constitution of Rembau there had been only four *lembaga* to advise the *Undang*. They all came from Lower Rembau (Rembau Baroh). Since the establishment of the four *lembaga* in Upper Rembau, the darat and the baroh *lembaga* met on no common ground. Thus from that year the council of *lembaga*, without reference to which the *Undang* was constitutionally unable to deliver judgement in his hall of audience (*balai*) or conclude any agreement binding his state, was known as 'the council of the eight' (*lembaga yang delapan*).

In that same year, Raja Ali and his son-in-law, Syed Shaaban dragged Rembau into the Naning War (1831-32). The involvement of Raja Ali and Syed Shaaban in this war was due to Raja Ali being persuaded (perhaps by the Penghulu of Naning) that the British column would go on from Naning to restore Raja Laboh to his throne⁷². Shaaban and Raja Ali were in due course persuaded (by the British) that there was no British plan to assist Raja Laboh. They then readily changed sides and gave their support to the second British invasion of Naning⁷³.

Before the second British expedition of the war, Raja Ali signed a treaty with the British. The *Undang* and the *lembaga* and the *Datuk Muda* of Linggi⁷⁴ too did all in their power to obstruct the negotiation and the signing of the treaty⁷⁵ but failed. In the end they had to give in and signed a treaty at Simpang on the British ship *Zephyr*. All the while the *Undang* and the *lembaga* were nursing their wrath, awaiting their opportunity to dispose Raja Ali and his son-in-law.

Raja Ali, after the Naning War gave some of his 'power' to Syed Shaaban. Giving 'power' to Syed Shaaban was a mistake on the part of Raja Ali. Syed Shaaban was not a popular man in Rembau⁷⁶, though his father, Syed Ibrahim was a religious teacher at Chembong⁷⁷. Since Rembau was a matrilineal society, the father's blood counted for very little. It was through the mother's blood that descent is traced. As it was, Syed Shaaban's mother, Sri Khamis was a slave, a *Khana-zana* of Zainuddin, formerly *Kapitan Melayu* or headman of the Malay community at Malacca, and a concubine of his father⁷⁸.

Since 1824 Raja Ali's whole policy had been devoted to the advancement of the interest of his son-in-law and to securing the Syed's recognition as heir to the office⁷⁹; and he finally installed him a *Yang Di Pertuan Muda* at Bandar on

72 Raja Laboh, who was invited from Minangkabau, with the powerful support of the *Datuk Klana* of Sungei Ujong, to become the *Yang Di Pertuan Besar*, fell out with his patrol, *Datuk Klana* in a celebrated quarrel over royal tax on the *Datuk's* winnings on a cock-fight and Raja Laboh fled to Malacca.

73 For his service in the war, Syed Shaaban was conferred the title of *Panglima Besar* by the British.

74 In this meeting, *Datuk Muda Linggi*, *Datuk Katas* was found to be an uninvited guest. He was exposed to public humiliation by the British by being requested to withdraw from the meeting. But nevertheless the *Undang* and Rembau chiefs insisted on adjourning from time to time to consult *Datuk Katas* in his boat.

75 Begbie, P.J. 1834, *The Malayan Peninsula*, repr. ed. K. Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1967, pp. 196-98.

76 Wilkinson, 1911, op. cit., p. 301.

77 Newbold, 1839, op. cit., p. 131.

78 *ibid.* His father, Syed Ibrahim al Kadri had moved from Malacca town to settle in Chembong, Rembau to propagate the faith among its possibly rather lax believers at that time.

79 Wilkinson, 1911, op. cit., p. 300.

13 September, 1832⁸⁰. Previous to this, Raja Ali, with the British recognition (the result of the 1832 treaty) to support him, declared himself **Yang Di Pertuan Besar** which was then vacant and in dispute. This can be seen from the Malacca-Rembau boundry treaty of January 1833⁸¹. In the preamble Raja Ali described as "Yam Tuan Besar of Rembau" and Syed Shaaban as "Yam Tuan Muda". The original treaty, preserved in the hands of Raja Ali's family, discloses that Raja Ali used a seal in which he described himself as "Sultan Ali" — no Negeri Sembilan raja had ever gone so far before. Syed Shaaban used a seal of office inscribed "Yam Tuan Muda". However, Raja Ali was quite unsuccessful in his claim to be the **Yang Di Pertuan Besar**; the office was eventually filled by Raja Radin, son of Yang Di Pertuan Besar Lenggang, with the support of the Datuk Klana of Sungei Ujong. Raja Ali did not attempt to resume the office of **Yang Di Pertuan Muda** which he vacated in favour of Syed Shaaban. As the situation stood, it was a very risky policy and action, and it proved a disaster for Raja Ali and his family in the next year.

In 1833 it was the folly of Syed Shaaban that gave the **Undang** and the **lembaga** of Rembau in particular, and the other chiefs of Negeri Sembilan the chance for which they were waiting. In that year Syed Shaaban and his followers plunged Rembau yet again into another war.

By ancient grant from **Undang** of Rembau to Raja Asil in 1798, the **Yang Di Pertuan Muda** had the right to collect duty on tin exported down the Linggi. Collection had fallen into abeyance for some time but Syed Shaaban decided in 1833 to fortify Simpang Linggi⁸² and resume collection of duty. In the early 1830s the output of tin in the Linggi area was increasing. **Datuk Muda Katas**, and also Malacca merchants who were his trade partners, were not disposed to allow Syed Shaaban to extract part of the profits of their trade. Thus Syed Shaaban's blockade of the Linggi River above Simpang to enforce payment of his dues was plainly to end in fighting. Syed Shaaban panicked and attacked **Datuk Muda Katas** of Linggi.

When the attack failed and **Datuk Muda Katas** hit back with a raid on Syed Shaaban's territory in Rembau, Syed Shaaban called on the **Undang**, **Datuk Lela Maharaja Nganit**, for assistance but the **Datuk** stood aloof. Syed Shaaban then, to quote Wilkinson "committed an act of blazing indiscretion"⁸³ by sending a small band of his followers to surprise and kill the **Datuk**. The **Datuk** however, managed to escape with his wife but his house was plundered and burnt. A ruinous civil war broke out between Syed Shaaban and Raja Ali, and the **Datuk** and the clan chiefs of Rembau who had sunk their differences in their detestation of a half-Arab interloper. The military balance swung against Syed Shaaban by aid given to his Rembau opponents by the combined forces of **Datuk Muda Katas** of Linggi and his powerful patron, **Datuk Klana Putra** of Sungei Ujong. It ended in the flight of Raja Ali and Syed Shaaban in 1836. They retired to Kru and Tampin respectively⁸⁴.

80 Newbold, 1834, op. cit., p. 258.

81 For its full translated text see Maxwell and Gibson, 1924, op. cit., p. 208.

82 The junction where the Penajis River joins the Linggi River.

83 Wilkinson, 1911, op. cit., p. 304.

84 They were for a time driven out by a raiding party from Rembau but were able to re-establish themselves; they continued to collect local taxes in Tampin and Kru without further hindrance from Rembau. Raja Ali died at Kru in 1850 or 1856.

As a result of the war, Rembau was partitioned. The larger western portion remained under the **Undang** and the **lembaga** of Rembau, but Tampin Tengah, Kru, Repah and Tebong were surrendered to Syed Shaaban who took the lesser title of **Tengku Besar** of Tampin⁸⁵. Thus ended the office of **Yang Di Pertuan Muda** of Rembau, though Syed Shaaban tried to bid for the title again 1842⁸⁶ but failed. In 1873-1883 his son, Syed Hamid, the second **Tengku Besar** of Tampin also tried for the title with the help of Haji Mustapha, a candidate for the undang-ship of Rembau⁸⁷ and a Laksamana Budin, a petty chief in Rembau⁸⁸. However, he never succeeded in securing recognition and had to be content with Tampin which was completely severed from Rembau, as Rembau was from any further connection with a **Yang Di Pertuan Muda**⁸⁹.

To us the election of the **Yang Di Pertuan Besar** of Negeri Sembilan was just a symbolic gesture on the part of the four **Undang**. We cannot compare the **Yang Di Pertuan Besar** of Negeri Sembilan with the other **Sultan** or/and **raja** of the other states of the Malay Peninsula, because in Negeri Sembilan effective power and the only kind of power ideologically justified by myth, tradition, and adat, resided in clan heads (**lembaga**) and district heads (**undang**).

To the Negeri Sembilan Malays the word **raja**, particularly those instances where they occur in the **perbilangan**, present a totally different conception of the office. In its ideal form, the word **raja** means judge and arbiter, that is, the highest office of justice in matters of **adat**. That was why **Raja Kasah** and **Raja Adil** were sent back to Minangkabau in the 1720s and 1730s. They could not introduce or were not competent in the **adat** laws. Since this was the **raja's** function, it was not surprising that the **Yang Di Pertuan Besar** of Negeri Sembilan were never granted any real executive political power not only to deal with external affairs but also with domestic affairs of the other 'states' outside Sri Menanti, until the 1930s. From the beginning, his authority had been clearly defined :

85 Sheppard, 1965, op. cit., pp. 37-8. Syed Shaaban died in 1872 and was buried in Tampin.

86 Khoo Kay Kim, 1972, op. cit., p. 47. In 1843, on the death of Datuk Nganit he offered himself as candidate for the vacant office of **Undang** of Rembau. When this failed he persuaded the new **Undang** (Datuk Akhir) to support his claim for restoration as **Yang Di Pertuan Muda**, but the British checked that plan also.

87 Khoo Kay Kim, 1972, op. cit., p. 150; Hervey, 1884, op. cit., p. 250.

88 Thio, 1969, op. cit., p. 34; Philip Loh, 1969, *The Malay States 1877-1895*, K. Lumpur: Oxford University Press, pp-50 1.

89 Hervey, 1884, op. cit., p. 250. For discussions of Syed Hamid's manoeuvre to get recognition as **Yang Di Pertuan Muda** of Rembau, see Gullick, 1976, op. cit., pp 1-21.

The Raja does not own the country, nor can he levy taxes on its produce but with him lies the final award of justice only, and he obtains a maintenance of a *suku* (twelve cents), one *gantang* of rice and a string (two) of coconut.⁹⁰

However, even his judicial power on the *adat* laws was also very seldom, if ever, referred to. Most probably such cases seldom arose, because the *perbilangan* says :

Kata bercari kepada lembaga,
Sah batal kepada undang,
Hidup mati kepada keadilan.

(The deliberation by the lembaga,
The decision by the undang,
Life and death by the ruler).

and :

Tali pengikat kepada lembaga,
Keris penyalang kepada undang,
Pedang pemacung kepada keadilan.

(The cord which binds is the lembaga's,
The execution kris, the Undang's,
The headman's sword, the raja's).

and also :

Raja se keadilan,
Pengkulu se Undang,
Tua se lembaga.

(The king carries out his justice,
The pengkulu his law,
The elder his ancestral rights).

90 Hervey, 1884, *op. cit.*, p. 248 [Ada pun raja itu tiada mempunyai negeri dan tiada mencukai kharajar, melainkan berkeadilan sahaja, serta permakanan duit sesuku, beras segantang, nyior setali]. However, after the forth Yang Di Pertuan Besar, Raja Radin (1824-1861) the Yang Di Pertuan Besar has a luak of himself — Sri Menanti and after the formation of the modern Negeri Sembilan, besides being the ruler of Sri Menanti by right of birth, he is also the ruler of Negeri Sembilan by election.

All the above stanzas tell us that only matters that cannot be solved by the lembaga and Undang are brought before the keadilan (justice) which refers to the Yang Di Pertuan Besar or raja. Furthermore, in theory he was bound to consult and follow the majority verdict of the four Undang on questions referred to him⁹¹.

In Rembau, for example, I found only one case in one of the terombo (local history or tradition, hand written, no date) of Rembau that had been referred to the Yang Di Pertuan Besar. The case was that of Raja Ali's and Syed Shaaban's rebellion in 1833⁹². Other than that, almost always, all cases of adat were solved by the Undang themselves because Sah batal pada Undang (the decision: confirm or annul is by Undang) and then Keris penyalang kepada Undang (the execution kris is with the Undang). To illustrate this power of the Undang a case in Rembau can be taken as an example. In the early 1880s, Datuk Lela Maharaja Haji Sahil (1871-1883) put a Javanese man to death at Nerasau. He did it without reference to the Yang Di Pertuan Besar at Sri Menanti. In this case, Datuk Haji Sahil was using his judicial power allotted by the adat as stated above⁹³.

Furthermore, the Undang is also the ruler of the luak in which he wields supreme authority as the perbilangan below indicates:

Boleh menghitam dan memutehkan,
Boleh memanjang dan memendikan,
Boleh mengesah dan membatalkan.

(With authority to pronounce black and white.
With authority to lengthen and shorten,
With authority to confirm and annul).

Thus, the value of the Yang Di Pertuan Besar's prerogative in his function as the 'fountain of justice' depended greatly on the trust the chiefs put in him, which unfortunately was sometime very little, indeed.

Besides being 'fountain of justice', he was also supposed to be the head of religious laws and the court of final resort in all disputes regarding Muslim customs because:

Adat bersendikan hukum,
Hukum bersendi Kitabu'llah.

(Customary law hinges on religious law,
Religious law on the book of God [Quran]).

91 Parr and Mackray. 1910. *op. cit.*, p. 62.

92 See also Lister, M., 1890, 'Malay Law in Negri Sembilan', JSBRAS, 21, p. 305.

93 This was one of the main factors used by Weld in 1883 to dispose Haji Sahil and elect a man of his choice, Datuk Serun as the new Undang of Rembau.

This was one of the conditions imposed on the first **Yang Di Pertuan Besar** when he was brought over from Minangkabau. Because furthermore :

**Sultan berdaulat,
Bergelanggang, berkhalfah.**

(The **Sultan** is sacrosanct,
Commands high festival, paramount).

But, just as with his position as 'fountain of justice' in the adat law, so in this respect too he was never referred to because another stanza says :

Pesaka Undang :
berkhalfah,
berterombo;
Bersabda di balai.

(The **Undang** is paramount :
holders fo records,
has council of lembaga;
Delivers his order from his hall of audience).

So thus is created something of an *imperium in imperio*, a state consisting of four **luak**, each having its own ruler or **Undang** with the **Yang Di Pertuan Besar** occupying the position of a supreme overlord but having a very vague and limited power.

The term 'supreme overlord' here is not appropriate because the **Undang** (Sungei Ujong, Jelebu, Johol and Rembau) do not *mengadap* or perform obeisance to the **Yang Di Pertuan Besar** except insofar as the formal obeisance made on the installation of the new **Yang Di Pertuan Besar** can be considered as such. And the sayings flatly deny the obligation on the **Undang** to supply the **Yang Di Pertuan Besar** with men and material for war, but the necessary contribution of three buffaloes and of alms at a royal marriage, circumcision, or burial feast is admitted by local antiquarians. The four *penghulu* of **Luak Ulu Muar**, **Jempul**, **Terachi** and **Gunung Pasir** do *mengadap* at triennially, and on other occasions individually to each **luak**.

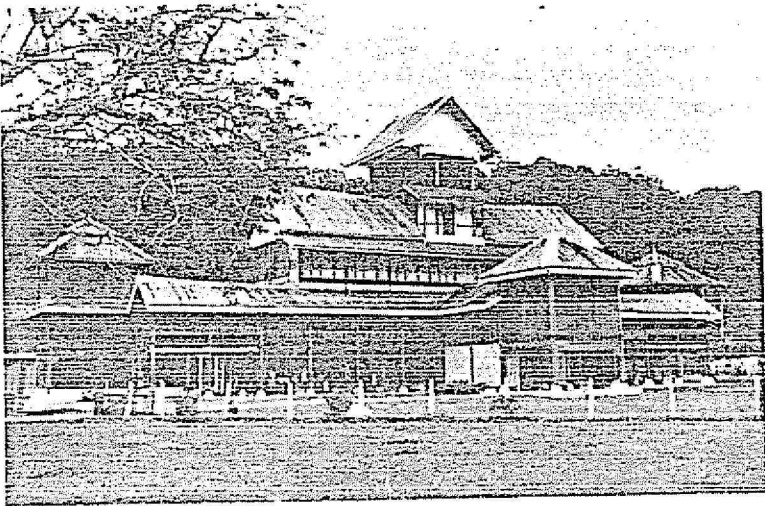
This situation (in connection with the four **Undang**) exists because as stated earlier, the **Yang Di Pertuan Besar** was just a symbol, an idol which in theory had its function but in practical terms he had none. There is a possibility that besides the reason just stated, the calling of a **raja** from Minangkabau was just to establish a relationship between the people of **Negeri Sembilan** and the rulers of Minangkabau in Sumatra. Indeed as stated earlier, the adat of **Negeri Sembilan** (a rantau of Minangkabau) constitution demands such a relationship and this has the function of acting as *grundnorm* to the whole scheme.

Finally, the office of **Yang Di Pertuan Muda** of Rembau, which from the beginning was never part of the adat constitution, (though Samuel Garling considered it as an innovation⁹⁴), was forced into the constitution of Rembau. Such being the case, the **Yang Di Pertuan Muda** of Rembau was a 'ruler' with 'no regalia, neither has he any people or territory of his own', thus he was a powerless and helpless as

94 Braddell, T, 1856, op. cit., p. 221.



ISTANA BESAR SERI MENANTI



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the **Yang Di Pertuan Besar** or even worse since he did not possess a distinctive position of his own in the theory of the constitution⁹⁵, which was summarized in the *perbilangan* :

Alam beraja,
luak berpenghulu,
suku bertua,
anakbuah berbuapak,
orang semenda bertempat semenda;
Dagang bertempatan,
perahu bertambatan.

(The raja rules the empire.
the *penghulu* rules the state.
the chief rules the clan.
the elder rules the clanfolk.
the married man to the place of his marriage;
the stranger finds a clan, as
the boat an anchorage).

However, the post, once created, was accepted. Though it was not mentioned in the *perbilangan* that summarized the constitution as seen above, it appears in another *perbilangan*, most probably having been created in the early nineteenth century, which runs :

Sultan Besar di negeri Sri Menanti,
Pertuan Muda di negeri Rembau.

(The highest local chief is at Sri Menanti.
The Second local chief is at Rembau).

Thus, it is pertinent to point out that Raja Ali and Syed Shaaban did succeed in achieving quite a high status in Negeri Sembilan and Rembau although the post they held was not in the constitution. It is true that they did not obtain unanimous support but this may be ascribed to their ambitious, aggressive personalities which as we have seen tended to alienate some of the *penghulu* and *lembaga*. Raja Ali and Syed Shaaban might have established themselves and been accepted as **Yang Di Pertuan Muda** in Rembau if they had avoided antagonising too many powerful neighbours besides the local chiefs. They were never content with the reality of power which they had managed to achieve but preferred to imperil it for the sake of empty titles. As a consequence they were driven out of Rembau. However, for a man who was not popular in Rembau due to his mother's blood, Syed Shaaban did achieve a high status. He managed to establish himself, and his successors as an independent ruler of Tampin though he took the lesser title of **Tengku Besar**.

95 Wilkinson, 1911, op. cit., 6. 314. The descendents of **Yang Di Pertuan Muda** of Rembau was more fortunate since they manage to secure and established themselves in Tampin, whereas the office of **Yang Di Pertuan Muda** of Jelebu, after the death of Raja Abdullah, was permanently abolished by the then *Undang* (Syed Ali bin Zin) with the support of the British. This decision was ratified by the agreement of September 1886. For next of the agreement see Maxwell and Gibson, 1924, op. cit., pp. 55-57.

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Abbreviations

- BTL : Bijdragen Tot De Taal-, Land-en Volkenkunde.
JIA : Journal of the India Archipelago and Eastern Asia.
JMBRAS : Journal of the Malayan/Malaysian Branch Asiatic Society.
JSBRAS : Journal of the Straits Branch Royal Asiatic Society.
PMS : Papers on Malay Subjects.
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