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REIGN OF RAJA SYED ALWI IBN SYED SAFI JAMALULLAIL IN PERLIS (1905-1943): MODERNISATION AND SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Perlis was seldom in the limelight since it was part of Kedah. From the 14th to 17th century, seven generations of the Kedah Sultanate had thrived in Kota Si Puteh (in Kubang Pasu District) since it was located approximately three miles from the border of Perlis or 18 to 19 miles if the distance is measured from Perlis river to Kuala Perlis beach. This article will discuss the modernisation and socioeconomic development during the reign of Raja Syed Alwi Jamalullail in Perlis between 1905 to 1943. The objectives of this research is to discuss how Raja Syed Alwi managed to restore the economic problems of Perlis once he ascended the throne. The objective of this article is to discuss the socio-economic development during his reign. The methodology of the study is a qualitative method based on historical discipline. This study found that during the reign of Raja Syed Alwi Jamalullail, there was a process of modernisation and some development in socio-economic aspects. Although in the early stages of his reign he had faced financial issues, he managed to solve those problems, formed the Perlis State Council Meeting and planned some socio-economic developments that led to modernisation for the state of Perlis.

Keywords: *Raja Syed Alwi, Perlis, Modernisation, Development, Socioeconomy*

Introduction

Perlis was part of the Kedah Sultanate and located on the northwest and north side of Kubang Pasu district. Kota Sena was the first capital of Kedah which was established in Perlis territory in 1655 by Sultan Muhyiddin Mansor Shah until 1661. Several sultans had ruled Perlis since the early ruling from the descendants of Kedah rulers as well as the House of Jamalullail. The first phase of Perlis's ruling originated from Kedah rulers beginning from Tunku Dhiauddin Mukarram Shah, who was crowned as the successor of Sultan of Kedah for six years (1798-1804),¹ and later known as Raja Perlis.²

The second phase of ruling in Perlis was from the House of Jamalullail or known as Syed Harun Jamalullail.³ He was of Arab descent from Palembang who came to Kedah in the 18th century and married the daughter of Sultan Dhiauddin named Tunku Safiah and he was conferred Arau district in 1797⁴ After the demise of Tunku Dhiauddin, Syed Harun with Tunku Safiah had appeared before the Sultan of Kedah to clarify the state of Arau district management. The Sultan declared Arau was in the hands of Syed Harun and he was elected as the first “*penghulu*” (leader) of the area.⁵ Syed Harun wished to gain sovereignty for Perlis which meant it would be separated from the Kedah Sultanate reign. With all the efforts put by Syed Harun, his lineage eventually managed to take the throne of Perlis and the first ruler was Hussain Jamalullail.⁶ Raja Rama III had crowned Syed Hussain with the title “Phya Songkhram Ramma Wichit Wilis Asmara Phya Perlis”. In 1843, a new state named Perlis Indera Kayangan was put under the protection of Siam until 1909. Next in line for Perlis was Raja Syed Ahmad (1873-1897), Raja Syed Safi (1897-1904),⁷ Raja Syed Alwi Ibn Syed Safi Jamalullail (1905-1943) and this continues until today.⁸

This article will discuss the modernisation and socioeconomic development during the reign of Raja Syed Alwi Jamalullail in Perlis between 1905 to 1943. For that purpose, this research will use the concept of development. Based on Riyadi and Deddy Supriyadi, development is a change from an economic, social, and *cultural* point of view through policies and strategies.⁹ Meanwhile, Ginanjar Kartasasmita provides a simpler definition of development, which is a process of change for the better than before through efforts that have been planned by certain parties.¹⁰ In order to achieve the idea in this development concept, the government needs to make a careful plan to succeed in the development despite facing various challenges and obstacles. It seems that the planning done by Syed Alwi has brought changes to the socio-economic aspects in Perlis such as education, health, infrastructure and so on despite facing various challenges, including major challenges in the financial aspect.

This study uses various types of primary sources such as the Colonial Office Records, Annual Report of the Straits Settlements and Malay manuscripts. Colonial Office Records and Annual Report of the Straits Settlements were obtained from the National Archives of Malaysia. Manuscripts in Jawi scripts like MS 85 *Salsilah Perlis* was obtained from the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP) Library, MS46943 *Peraturan Raja-raja Negeri Kedah* was obtained from the University of SOAS Library and Microfilm 1055.8, *Peringatan Raja-raja Kedah* from the University of Malaya Library. While other authoritative secondary sources such as books and journal articles were obtained from the Library of Public Institutions of Higher Learning (IPTA).

Raja Syed Alwi Jamalullail's Ascension

Raja Syed Alwi was a male heir from Raja Syed Safi and his consort Wan Saadiah (Michu) who came from a royal family of Kalahum palace (Siamese Prime Minister) in Bangkok. Having married Syed Safi, Michu changed her name to Wan Saadiah. Raja Syed Alwi was born in Arau in November 1881 and received his formal education at St. Xavier Institution, Penang.¹¹ Raja Syed Safi ruled for about eight years from 1897 until 1905 and when he passed away, his son Raja Syed Alwi was appointed King of Perlis who ruled from 1905 to 1943.

Visual 1: Raja Syed Alwi bin Syed Safi (1897-1938)



Source: Hussain Baba Bin Mohamad, *Sejarah Negeri dan Raja-Raja Perlis*, Perlis:Perlis Indera Kayangan Collection, Perbadanan Perpustakaan Awam Perlis, 1969.

Raja Syed Alwi Jamalullail who was born in the palace of Arau Perlis on 12 Jamadilawal 1298 (13 November 1881) ascended the throne at the age of 21 years old. After the death of his father on 30 December 1904, Syed Ali with his brother Syed Mahmud Jamalullail, Syed Salim al-Jafri, Datuk Wan Teh bin Datuk Belat and Abdullah bin Cik Saad went to Bangkok to inform the King of Siam of his father's death. They were housed in a special palace in Ban Kuang.¹² Raja Syed Alwi was installed by the King of Siam as the fourth King of Perlis and also known as “Phya Songkhram Ramu Wichit Wilis Asmara Phya Pelit” by Raja Chulalongkorn according to the custom of Siam royals. His brother, Tuan Syed Mahmud Jamalullail was given the title crown prince or Raja Muda Perlis, the third.¹³

Raja Syed Alwi had three wives who were the queen, Sharifah Chut binti Syed Salim, Hajjah Che' Udoh binti Ibrahim as the second wife and Che' Fatimah binti Yasin as the third. Since Raja Syed Alwi did not have an heir, on the 6th of December 1934, Perlis State Executive Council had convened

to determine the next ruler in line as a successor for Raja Syed Alwi who was already getting much older. Hence, his nephew Syed Hassan ibn Syed Mahmud ibn Syed Safi Jamalullail was chosen as the next in line for the throne.¹⁴ Unfortunately, Syed Hassan passed away on August 18, 1935, and his heir, Syed Putra was chosen as the next Raja of Perlis. During the Japanese occupation, Syed Putra's title as the next ruler was revoked and Syed Hamzah was declared as the successor. After the demise of Raja Syed Safi on the 3rd of February 1943, his brother Syed Hamzah ibn Syed Safi was installed in 1943 as the fifth Raja of Perlis.¹⁵

The early challenge that Raja Syed Alwi had to face was the financial problems. When he was installed as Raja of Perlis, the state began to face financial problems and it deteriorated to the extent that other complications began to surface. This was due to the administrative budget which was reduced to \$27,000 and this amount was barely enough to sustain the state's affairs. Perlis' financial issues began during the reign of Raja Syed Safi Jamalullail (1897-1904) and were associated with large expenditures for Perlis development, overspending including the expenses for the royal family's pension imbursement at one-tenth of the whole amount.

Economic and Administrative Modernisation

A) State Financial Issues and the Resolution

It is believed that Raja Syed Alwi's reign had paved the way for the birth of an era of development and modernisation because of his brilliant efforts. It all began with the rejuvenation of state finance which was entangled in turmoil and the establishment of Perlis State Council Meeting (*Majlis Mesyuarat Negeri Perlis*); all these result in improvements in social and economical activities in the state.

One of the first actions taken by Raja Syed Alwi was to call for a meeting with his dignitaries to solve the financial issues. Finally, it consented that Perlis would take a loan from Siam as this was also the way out for Kedah, when the state faced a similar financial problem.¹⁶ Hence, on 4th October 1905, Perlis had signed an agreement prior to achieving \$ 230, 000 with the interest of six percent from King Chulalongkorn. It was a five-article contract that mentioned the payment regulation which included a statement that Raja Perlis must accept an Advisory Officer, A.H Duke who was appointed by the Kingdom of Siam. A.H Duke was tasked to assist the financial administration of Perlis until the loan was paid in full. The officer's monthly payment must also be paid from the state's revenue.¹⁷ Unfortunately, the loan was unable to put an end to Perlis' financial problems. Entangled in financial issues, the Perlis State required a reliable source of money to pay the salary of the ruler, royals, dignitaries, and an advisory officer which was appointed by Siam, Mr.

A. H. Duke. Consequently, Duke had advised the state to take up another loan from the Kingdom of Siam (\$150,00) in 1907 with the same amount of interest. Perlis had to pay up its loan and interest in five years before 14 February 1912. Instructions were given to the Penang branch of the Hong Kong and Shanghai cooperative banks to credit a total of \$ 150,000 into the Perlis government account.¹⁸

Visual 2: The amount of interest on the loan made by the Perlis government from the Kingdom of Siam from 19th November 1905 to 14th February

Date	Amount of Interest	Amount of Siam
Nov 1905	16,244.00	1
Dec 1905	16,244.00	1
Jan 1906	16,244.00	1
Feb 1906	16,244.00	1
Mar 1906	16,244.00	1
Apr 1906	16,244.00	1
May 1906	16,244.00	1
Jun 1906	16,244.00	1
Jul 1906	16,244.00	1
Aug 1906	16,244.00	1
Sep 1906	16,244.00	1
Oct 1906	16,244.00	1
Nov 1906	16,244.00	1
Dec 1906	16,244.00	1
Jan 1907	16,244.00	1
Feb 1907	16,244.00	1
Mar 1907	16,244.00	1
Apr 1907	16,244.00	1
May 1907	16,244.00	1
Jun 1907	16,244.00	1
Jul 1907	16,244.00	1
Aug 1907	16,244.00	1
Sep 1907	16,244.00	1
Oct 1907	16,244.00	1
Nov 1907	16,244.00	1
Dec 1907	16,244.00	1
Jan 1908	16,244.00	1
Feb 1908	16,244.00	1
Mar 1908	16,244.00	1
Apr 1908	16,244.00	1
May 1908	16,244.00	1
Jun 1908	16,244.00	1
Jul 1908	16,244.00	1
Aug 1908	16,244.00	1
Sep 1908	16,244.00	1
Oct 1908	16,244.00	1
Nov 1908	16,244.00	1
Dec 1908	16,244.00	1
Jan 1909	16,244.00	1
Feb 1909	16,244.00	1
Mar 1909	16,244.00	1
Apr 1909	16,244.00	1
May 1909	16,244.00	1
Jun 1909	16,244.00	1
Jul 1909	16,244.00	1
Aug 1909	16,244.00	1
Sep 1909	16,244.00	1
Oct 1909	16,244.00	1
Nov 1909	16,244.00	1
Dec 1909	16,244.00	1
Jan 1910	16,244.00	1
Feb 1910	16,244.00	1
Mar 1910	16,244.00	1
Apr 1910	16,244.00	1
May 1910	16,244.00	1
Jun 1910	16,244.00	1
Jul 1910	16,244.00	1
Aug 1910	16,244.00	1
Sep 1910	16,244.00	1
Oct 1910	16,244.00	1
Nov 1910	16,244.00	1
Dec 1910	16,244.00	1
Jan 1911	16,244.00	1
Feb 1911	16,244.00	1
Mar 1911	16,244.00	1
Apr 1911	16,244.00	1
May 1911	16,244.00	1
Jun 1911	16,244.00	1
Jul 1911	16,244.00	1
Aug 1911	16,244.00	1
Sep 1911	16,244.00	1
Oct 1911	16,244.00	1
Nov 1911	16,244.00	1
Dec 1911	16,244.00	1
Jan 1912	16,244.00	1
Feb 1912	16,244.00	1

Total Interest: \$15,190.53

Total Siam: \$150,000.00

Source: Papers of John Hamer, MSS Ind. Ocn. S 316. Box 1 File 2, Loan Contract. A. Duke (Adviser of Perlis State), Bodleian Library, Oxford University. (unpublished)

Through the loan agreement, the Kingdom of Siam had its hook deep inside Perlis and indirectly it was able to control Perlis while reducing the British influence on the Northern Malay states. Nevertheless, from a different perspective, Raja Syed Alwi had ingeniously used the financial issue to continue being the Kingdom of Siam’s protectorate so that he could escape from the ruling power of Sultan Abdul Hamid of Kedah. With his abilities and intelligence, Raja Syed Alwi was able to sustain his ruling until the end of his life even though the state was knee-deep in financial problems in the beginning.

When the British learned about Siam’s involvement in Perlis, they sent Mr. Meadow Frost to Alor Setar. As a result, the agreement known as Anglo-Siamese Treaty or Bangkok Treaty was established on 10th March 1909. Indirectly, the agreement led to the shift in the power play, dominion, administration, and control on Perlis from the Kingdom of Siam to the British. Even though Perlis was handed to the British without any consultation with

Raja Syed Alwi and Sultan Abdul Hamid of Kedah¹⁹ it was a blessing to Perlis since the British had used money from the Federated Malay States to settle the state's loan and interest to the Kingdom of Siam together with Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu. However, Perlis was still not officially the British protectorate since the loan which was paid in installments was only settled in 1929. In 1930, Perlis was finally a British protectorate and another agreement with the British with Raja Syed Alwi was made without the Kingdom of Siam's involvement and Perlis had to accept a British Advisor.²⁰

B) The Establishment of Perlis State Council Meeting (*Majlis Mesyuarat Negeri Perlis*)

During Raja Syed Alwi's reign, Perlis State Council Meeting (*Majlis Mesyuarat Negeri Perlis*) was formed based on a suggestion made by G.C. Hart who was also the Financial Advisor to the Sultan of Kedah. Perlis State Council Meeting was chaired by Raja Syed Alwi as Raja of Perlis and G.C. Hart as Acting Secretary on 18th November 1905. The second meeting was on 2nd December in 1905 and A.H. Duke who attended it was selected as the Secretary. All matters pertaining to the governance of Perlis were put under the administrative power of Perlis State Council Meeting, and in fact, the power of the ruler and his dignitaries was limited and determined by the British.²¹ Nevertheless, the line of dignitaries who were appointed during his father's ruling such as Syed Salim al-Jafri, Syed Hassan bin Syed Alwi, Dato' Wan Teh bin Dato' Arau, Syed Abdullah bin Syed Alwi, Syed Abdullah bin Syed Ismail, Wan Ishak bin Dato' Wan Daud dan Haji Kassim bin Hj. Ali were continued and this included *Kadhi* Chief of Perlis, Haji Muhammad Nor bin Haji Muhammad. As for his brother Syed Mahmud bin Syed Safi, he was appointed as Raja Muda Perlis.²²

At first, the Perlis State Council appeared to have introduced an organized administration. However, this did not contribute to a resolution to the state's financial problems since Perlis had loaned from Siam (Thailand) which indicated that it was not financially stable. Generally, the role of Siam-appointed advisory officer was like the British Resident who was sent to Perak, Selangor, Pahang and Negeri Sembilan to advise the state rulers except in matters pertaining to religion and the Malay customs. However, for Perlis and Kedah, it was not mentioned that the advisory officer would not meddle in those issues. In fact, the Duke himself seemed to be involved indirectly in religious and cultural matters of the locals as well as constantly putting pressure on the government staff.

Since Perlis unofficially became part of the British governance in 1909, the latter maintained its system through the Perlis State Council. The British had ordered Mr. Meadow Frost to serve in Perlis as an advisory officer to Raja Syed Alwi from 15 October 1909 until 24 November 1911.²³ A minor change was applied in which the advisory officer could only offer his

services for state administrative matters except for issues related to religion and Malay custom..²⁴ Even though Frost had the power to implement new rules and regulations, they were subjected to approval from Raja Syed Alwi and the board of Perlis State Council. Meadow was later replaced by several advisory officers who were sent to Perlis during the reign of Raja Syed Alwi.

Visual 1: Perlis Advisory Officer during Raja Syed Alwi’s reign

ADVISERS IN PERLIS.	
14.10.09	A. H. Duke (Under Siamese)
15.10.09 - 24.11.11.	Meadows Frost.
25-11-11 - 19. 4.13	H. C. Eckhardt.
20.12.13 - 31. 5.20	H. C. Eckhardt.
	E. W. A. Wyatt. (Che Matt acting before and after)
1. 3.22 - 18. 6.23	T. W. Clayton.
19. 6.23 - 8. 5.25	J. W. W. Hughes
9. 5.25 - 24. 5.28	P. S. Williams.
25. 5.28 - 30.11.30	L. A. Allen.
1.12.30 - 15. 7.32	M. C. Hay.
16. 7.32 - 27. 4.35	O. E. Venables
28. 4.35 - 7.37	C. R. Howitt
7.37 - 21. 4.39	C. W. Dawson.
22. 4.40 - the War	E. V. G. Day
	Japanese Occupation.
	Siamese Occupation.
	British Military Administration.

Source: Papers of John Hamer, MSS Ind. Ocn. S 316. Box 1 File 1, Advisers in Perlis, Bodleian Library, Oxford University

Since the British Advisor did not take part in matters pertaining to religion (Islam), Raja Syed Alwi had played a role in religious administration in Perlis. He introduced the *zakat* and *fitrah* collection system in Perlis in 1917. For that purpose, a committee for the collection of *zakat* and *fitrah* has been appointed and they received donations which amounted to \$64, 684. This caused Raja Syed Alwi to declare the rules and regulations on *zakat* and *fitrah* in 1921. He was the advisor to Zakat and Fitrah Department while Perlis’s top magistrate known as Tuan Haji Ahmad bin Haji Muhammad was appointed as the leader or respected state council member. The committee was successful in coordinating the *zakat* and *fitrah* which were systematically collected at that time. In addition, Religious Department was established in Arau Syariah Court enactment 1340/1920 to handle matters related to Islam. The basis of religious administration was formed on the success of Commerce Community that was initiated by Raja Syed Alwi to construct a mosque in Kangar in 1930. The mosque was later named Masjid Alwiyyah and the first imam was Hj. Mohd Rawi bin Mohd Jamil.²⁵

Since Perlis had cleared its debt with the Federated Malay States, the state believed that it was no longer linked to Siam or the British. In fact, the

British Financial Advisor service was considered as having ended at the end of 1929. Raja Syed Alwi could have taken that opportunity to “free and liberate” Perlis from the British’s influence: he could also declare full sovereignty for Perlis especially when the Jamalullail royal clan was then more influential than before. Nevertheless, these situations did not take place and he had consented that the British remained influential in Perlis. From this arrangement, Raja Syed Alwi could remain in power and maintain his significance as Raja of Perlis.²⁶

Prior to new agreement, which was about to be signed on 28th April 1930, several clauses offered by the British as stated in the draft, were amended by Raja Syed Alwi himself through the Perlis State Council session in 1929. For instance, Raja Syed Alwi emphasised that Perlis carried the identity of a government and not a state of which he was the head of governance and his lineage would continue to rule the state. However, his successor must be appointed by the State Council in the presence of a financial advisor along with a document which was pre-signed by the British Emperor.²⁷ All of these requirements were granted by the British in the process of drafting the agreement.

Generally, the 1930 agreement was not an acknowledgement for Perlis’ international ties, it paved the way for a constitution to form a distinct identity of Perlis. Moreover, the Perlis-British agreement in 1930 had successfully strengthened the Malay elite influence in the state’s governance as compared to previous years. Raja of Perlis had lost his absolute power and the Malay elite had a stronger voice and their perspectives were influential in state administration and decision making. To preserve the dignity and identity of Perlis, Raja Syed Alwi asked for an additional item in the agreement with the British to add the clause which stated that the Malay State Council officers must be Perlis-born Malays. His demand was intended to loosen Kedah’s grip which was inclusive of limiting the Kedah Advisor influence on Perlis administration and acquiring autonomous power on politics and economy from Kedah.²⁸

Since Perlis administration was still in its infancy, its efficiency was far from being well-established. Therefore, the British had attempted to assist Perlis in administration and management so that it would be more systematic and fairer, without the intervention from the Sultan. In 1929, Sir Hugh Clifford, British High Commissioner had stated that:

The administration of any of the Unfederated Malay States must inevitably, in existing circumstances, be on a somewhat lower plane of efficiency than that of the Federated Malay States. It is our policy in the former to refrain, as far as possible, from taking the task of administration out of the hands of the Sultans and their officers by transferring it to Europeans, our object being to assist, guide and

*train the ruling classes of the indigenous population in the wise and just management of their own affair.*²⁹

In addition, Raja Syed Alwi was focused on preserving his ruling, Malay culture and language. These efforts were exemplified in the running of meetings which was conducted in Malay and the minutes of meetings that were also prepared in the same language. In fact, rules which were drafted in English would be printed in Malay and English and the Malay version became the official regulations. Similarly, Perlis State Council consisted of five members namely Raja Syed Alwi as the President, three government officers who were Malays: Syed Hamzah Jamalullail, Hj. Mohd Noor Ahmad (*Kadhi/Mufti*), Tuan Syed Idrus, Hj. Ahmad bin Hj. Muhammad and L.A. Allen (British Advisor)³⁰ represented the non-Malay and the British.³¹ As the British protectorate, Raja Syed Alwi was given the right to produce a written consent for any financial advisor who would be appointed and to remain in the position. Compared to other states, Perlis had the least European officers (4) which comprised of one general government staff, an engineer, a surveyor, and a rubber planter in 1911. There was no European officer in the district administration, customs, and government-linked companies³²

While Perlis was a British protectorate, Perlis State Council was sustained because the British wanted the service to continue. However, Perlis State Council during Raja Syed Alwi's time was different from the Federated Malay States since the council had the full legislative power to enforce rules and regulations as well as manage the state's finance. In general, through the establishment of the Perlis State Council, there were many benefits and development for the people of Perlis in political, economic, and social aspects. On top of that, during his reign, Raja Syed Alwi had played a significant role to lead Perlis towards modernisation.

Following the economic and administrative changes towards modernisation continued under his ruling, Perlis unofficially became one of the states under the British governance as a result of the Bangkok Treaty in 1909, later it officially became part of the British colonial rule in 1930. In fact, after being free from the Siam, Raja Syed Alwi introduced something new and bold by not presenting the golden and silver flowers to the King of Siam as it was practised before by other sultans, including himself in 1906. He was the only Raja of Perlis who presented golden flowers for the King of England and the last one in 1909.³³

Socioeconomic Development

A) Perlis Malay Education

Before 1909, Quranic education in Perlis was organized by the local Malays

and the education systems for the Indians and Chinese were run by people from the respective races. Education which was based on Western education was introduced in Perlis after 1909 where vernacular schools were built by using their mother tongue as the main language of delivery. Education development in Perlis was a bit lagged as compared to other Malay states. At that time, some groups in the society could not accept the idea of children going to school because some families relied on them to do various tasks on paddy fields. Hence, formal education was considered secular, the timing was inconducive and many schools were far from their areas.

When Raja Syed Alwi was the ruler, he had given an emphasised on education. For instance, in 1913, six Malay schools were built, and 320 students registered. Back in 1905, there were only four schools in Perlis when he first took the throne. Improvements continued to happen when the number of schools increased to nine and the students' enrolment was 435 in 1916. By 1921 two Malay schools were constructed and altogether there were 15 schools with 1275 students. The number of students increased the next year to 1344 male students with 80 percent attendance. From the number of schools, Quranic teachers had established eleven Quranic schools for evening sessions, but students' attendance was poor compared to the Malay school.³⁴ In 1923, all schools for girls were built in Arau Perlis and another one was constructed in Kangar in 1926. With the establishment of these new schools, the total number of schools was 19 at that time. All male schools were visited by the British Advisor and two more female teachers were monitored by Mrs. William in 1926. Seven male students successfully made it to Penang Free School, and they were sponsored by the state of Perlis, and another two students were sent to pursue their studies at Sultan Idris Training College (SITC), Tanjung Malim.³⁵

This positive development led to the establishment of the Perlis Education Department which was located at Perlis State Main Office in the same year. Mr. Wan Teh was appointed as its administrator and later followed by a Malay officer as the next administrator. In 1930, an educational committee was established to coordinate education in Malay schools. The school inspector system was created in 1938 and it was administered by J.W. Jefferson. By 1939, there were 23 Malay schools in Perlis and the number of teachers increased to 74 people between 1935 and 1936.

Other than Malay schools, the first Arabic school was built by Raja Syed Alwi and it was named Madrasah Alwiyyah al-Diniah in Arau in 1923/24. The establishment of this madrasah was inspired by the return of a Perlis student, Syeikh Mahmud Mat Saman from Al-Azhar University, Egypt at that time. The construction of this madrasah was monitored by Zakat and Fitrah Perlis's Office to give more opportunities to many students to pursue their studies to Egypt.³⁶ When the school was completed in 1926/27 the cost of construction was \$30,000: so, the students moved from Madrasah al-Arabiyyah

to Madrasah Alwiyyah. The school went through tremendous progress and the number of students increased from 470 students to 1959.

Raja Syed Alwi through the support from the State Council had sent Malay students from Perlis to pursue their studies in various fields with state scholarships. It was hoped that when they returned to their homeland, they would assist the administration of the state. This was stated in the new clause for an additional item, which was voiced by Raja Syed Alwi, addressed to the British in 1929. When there were more local educated officers in the state government departments, indirectly Raja Syed Alwi and all Perlis State Council could reduce the number of Kedah officers in Perlis governance. A gradual decline in the non-local officers in the state governance began systematically in 1932 using financial constraint as a reason or by cutting short the visit by Kedah engineer from once a month to several occasions only.³⁷

As for English school, it was not established yet except for Derma English School which was managed in Alor Setar to place students from Perlis who wished to pursue their education to a higher level.³⁸ On 11th September 1934, State Council appointed a committee namely 'Standing Committee' to manage matters related to secular education and religious education before it was taken over by *Jawatankuasa Zakat dan Fitrah*. Within this committee, 99 teachers (religious teachers were included) were appointed to manage educational issues. Religious Department administration as monitored by the committee continued to operate until the Japanese occupation in 1942. After the Japanese occupation, the religious administration in Perlis was under the Islamic Religious and Customary Council, which was established in 1948.³⁹

B) Public Health

When Perlis was the Kingdom of Siam protectorate, problems related to health were not given due attention. As a result, diseases such as malaria, cholera, and measles kept on increasing every year. At the end of the 19th century, there was no Department of Health or hospital in Perlis. Nevertheless, when Raja Syed Alwi was the ruler, a drastic change began to occur in the field of healthcare. Despite having financial problems in the state in 1909, Raja Syed Alwi wanted the vaccination campaign to be introduced to the people of Perlis. Until 1922, almost one-third of the population of Perlis had received the vaccination, which was 1815 people and the success rate in the vaccination process was 1613 people.⁴⁰

The vaccine was introduced by Edward Jenner in the 18th century in Singapore to curb the spread of diseases. Based on research, which was carried out by Jenner, he found that vaccination was able to cure several diseases such as smallpox, cholera, and others. Therefore, Federated Malay States had carried out a vaccination program for everyone in Perlis to prevent smallpox and other diseases from spreading. According to T. J Ortan who was a Colonial

Surgeon from Malacca, vaccination of the people in Perlis was efficiently carried out and he did not see other races such as Chinese, Indians, or the Indigenous people rejected the program. In fact, In truth, the Malays began to be appreciative of the state's efforts⁴¹

In addition, the state of Perlis also prepared facilities for health to encourage the local community to seek treatment at the hospital. For instance, wards at the hospital were opened to the public in 1914, and one Hospital Attendance as well as a Surgical Specialist who was taken from Kedah and came once a month. The death rate was recorded since 1919. Mr.Sivasambandam was invited all the way from India by the surgeon from Kedah and he worked on contract basis for three years with the hope that he could share the latest method in treating patients.⁴² Senior assistant, Mr. J.C. Chakrabutty reported duty at Kangar Hospital until 9th April 1925 and he was replaced by Mr. K. Raghava Pillai from Kedah Medical Department until December 1925.⁴³ Then, diseases like malaria, syphilis, and ulcer were the most common health problems faced by the people in Perlis. Locals received their vaccination shot as the prevention from other highly contagious diseases and they were willing to seek treatment when they were not well. Through the awareness instilled in the people of Perlis, the number of Malay patients kept increasing from time to time. Indirectly, with the improvement of medical services, the death rate at that time was reduced.⁴⁴

To curb the spread of diseases among those who lived in the rural areas, the state government had introduced a mobile dispensary in 1924. Dispensary could visit people in the areas of Arau and kaki Bukit once in two weeks. The mobile dispensary also went to Sanglang and Simpang Ampat at other times using the river route. Medications distributed by the dispensary were quinine, medication for ulcers and other small cases.⁴⁵ Other than going to the village areas, mobile dispensary also made visits to schools to provide complete facilities to treat people with mouth ulcers and support the campaign intensively among school children at the end of 1925.⁴⁶

Generally, this dispensary was well-received by the public as compared to the hospital since most hospitals were in urban areas. Those who stayed in rural areas found it challenging to travel to the hospital which was located too far from their areas. In 30 years, there were three allocated dispensaries, one mobile dispensary, two medical officers, four hospital assistants, an aesthetician, a waste carrier, and a trained midwife in Perlis.⁴⁷

Around 1924, one Lady Medical Officer was appointed in the state to assist treatment on Malay women and her aim was to reduce infant death among Malay farmers.⁴⁸ In 1926, one Malay midwife was required in the hospital and the position was taken by Teh binti Mohamed.⁴⁹ In 1927, "*family ward*" for two families were provided in the hospital for Malay women's comfort. Named as "Lilian Williams", the ward was a form of appreciation which was expressed by Mrs. Willian (the British Advisor wife) and it was

officialiated by Raja Syed Alwi in May 1928. Moreover, another ward for women was completed in the same hospital.⁵⁰

In addition, the training to be a midwife was also conducted during Raja Syed Alwi's time. Several local midwives were identified and chosen to be sent to Kedah to be trained for a year. For example, in 1938, the first batch of trainee midwives returned after completing their training in Kedah. However, they were not well accepted by the locals since they had this pre-judgemental attitude which could threaten the midwives themselves. Several printed materials were distributed with the help of community leaders to change their perception of others. Nevertheless, Perlis continued to send the second batch of trainee midwives for training and an allowance was given throughout the course.⁵¹ Trained midwives as provided by the government was one of the initiatives to ensure a positive infant mortality rate among the people in urban areas would be taken into consideration. This was as a strategy to ensure the increase in birth rates in the state. It was one of the ways to educate Malay women on taking care of their health during and after the pregnancy to encourage them to deliver at the hospital in the future.

C) Infrastructure Development

During Raja Syed Alwi's reign, the Perlis administration was restructured based on the role played by Mr. Meadow Frost, the British Advisor. Indeed, Raja Syed Alwi was the catalyst behind all modernisation initiatives in Perlis as they covered diverse aspects. It was also the time when Perlis State Council decided to get an assistant engineer to professionally monitor the Public Work Department (PWD)⁵² and this led to the establishment of some new departments. Public Work Department was a government department which was given the responsibility to provide public infrastructures such as roads and railways tracks, domestic water supply and others.

i. Roads and Railway Tracks

Infrastructure development is one of the key aspects to generating organized and systematic economic development. In the beginning, the inland paths were paved by the locals as they searched for sources of income in the thick jungles. Eventually, the paths were widened as roads after the British came with vehicles to settle matters pertaining to Perlis administration. The development of roads in Perlis started during the reign of Raja Syed Safi where a stretch of road was developed to link Perlis and Kedah through Koding and Jitra in 1902.⁵³

When Raja Syed Alwi was in power, he had doubled the efforts to modernise Perlis administration and infrastructure. Perlis had embarked on the construction of gravel roads which were better than the previous ones and upgraded the stretch of roads such as Jalan Kangar-Arau and Jalan Kangar-

Tasoh by paving them with tar. Inmates from Kangar Prison were utilized to work on paving the gravels with tar on these roads since the construction process took a long time.⁵⁴ Raja Syed Alwi did not only improve the existing roads but he paved new roads which connected Perlis with other Malay states.⁵⁵

Other than upgrading several roads which were already constructed during the previous lines of Raja Perlis, railway tracks were also built during the reign of Raja Syed Alwi. The train was one of the main modes of transportation in Perlis next to roads and rivers. Then, research on the construction of railway tracks began in 1913 where Mr.Laidlaw had carried out an initial study on the link which was to be developed. The idea to link the railway track was to connect Seberang Perai from Bukit Mertajam to Alor Setar and this railway would reach Perlis and continue until it reached the Kingdom of Siam border. Perlis had requested for a discussion with the authority involved or the train manager for the Federated Malay States: an agreement was signed after both parties had reached a consensus. The agreement was signed between Raja Syed Alwi (representative of Perlis) and Mr. Reginald George Watson, Secretary of Federated Malay States. From the agreement, Federated Malay States Railways had constructed the railway tracks through Arau, Bukit Ketri, Kubang Tiga, and Padang Besar which was in the Kingdom of Siam vicinity.⁵⁶ Perlis State Council had given approval for work on road paving at areas where tracks were to be built and it was in progress in 1915.⁵⁷ However, in 1917, the tracks were constructed without involving Kangar as the capital city and Kaki Bukit which was once a tin mining area. Padang Besar was the last railway station in Malaya, and it stretched further to Siam's border.⁵⁸

Perlis had granted free lands to the Federated Malay States Railway administration which had absorbed the cost to develop the tracks. Even though the development of these railway tracks could bring a lot of profit to the state, the Perlis administration handed the generated amount to Federated Malay States Railway as it was stated in the agreement between Raja Syed Alwi and Mr.Reginald George Watson who was the acting head of secretary for the Federated Malay States on June 16, 1914.⁵⁹ When the railway station at Padang Besar began its operation on July 1, 1918, it had positive effects to the area as physical changes were observed in those areas. Other than being the link between two governments, the track also brought about the establishment of new residential areas, job opportunities, improvements in the agricultural sector, economic growth among the locals and lastly, it was the hallmark of modernisation for Perlis.⁶⁰

ii. Domestic Water Supply

Water is an essential part of a human's life. Before the availability of modern water supply, people in Perlis mostly relied on natural water resources such as rivers or self-made wells in their areas. It was at these river valleys that

attracted many and the areas became the centre of governance and residential areas such as at Kota Sena, Kangar, and Kota Indera Kayangan, Kuala Perlis. Rulers who governed the rivers and valleys would have control over the generated income and economic activities which were carried out by the locals. Rivers were not merely waterways, but they provided fresh water to the people and paddy fields.

During the reign of Sultan Dhiauddin, a canal of 70 kilometres long was constructed to connect both palaces in Kota Indera Kayangan and Bukit Pinang. With the availability of these waterway channels, it was easier for the Sultan to visit his wives who resided in both palaces. It was also the waterway used to send golden flowers to the Kingdom of Siam and provided a source for for the locals and paddy field areas.⁶¹

In 1900, a devastating drought in Perlis had caused Raja Syed Syafi to send Dato' Setia Bakti to find water. The latter went all over the state to locate a source of water which could be used by the people and the royals at that time. Finally, Dato' Setia Bakti discovered Sungai Jerneh which had an excellent flow of water and had never dried out even during drought. The quest to find the source of water led to the construction of a canal that took place during the reign of Raja Syed Safi but for Raja Syed Alwi, he demanded improvement and upgrading of water supply management so that the operation would run smoothly without other predicaments.

The state of Perlis had plans in developing its water supply. After Raja Syed Alwi took the throne, the development of the water supply could be divided into three phases namely the first phase which began from 1909 until 1926, the second phase which began from 1926 to 1933, and the third phase began from 1933 to 1942. Water supply planning was not the main agenda for PWD at the beginning as compared to other basic facilities such as roads, mining parts, bridges, schools, and canals.⁶³ However, things took a different turn and water became the most required basic need for the people of Perlis for domestic and economic use.

Water supply management in Perlis was placed under the authority of Raja of Perlis since all administrative aspects and planning for water supply in the state must first be approved by the ruler. Moreover, Raja Syed Alwi was also actively involved in and shared the idea with the department which oversaw water supply during his reign. His involvement in the development of water supply in Perlis had convinced his subjects to shift to modern water supply systems in their daily lives. Being dedicated and serious in this matter, Raja Syed Alwi had approved of the canals to be built from Simpang Ampat to Arau which was 3 km long. Furthermore, the extension of Sungai Padang was completed, and several wooden bridges were replaced with pipes in 1923. A well-pump and water tank were provided in Kangar for the people to use. Water supply management in Perlis was placed under the authority of Raja of Perlis since all administrative aspects and planning for water supply in the

state must first be approved by the ruler. Moreover, Raja Syed Alwi was also actively involved in and shared the idea with the department which oversaw water supply during his reign. His involvement in the development of water supply in Perlis had convinced his subjects to shift to modern water supply systems in their daily lives. Being dedicated and serious in this matter, Raja Syed Alwi had approved of the canals to be built from Simpang Ampat to Arau which was 3 km long. Furthermore, the extension of Sungai Padang was completed, and several wooden bridges were replaced with pipes in 1923. A well-pump and water tank were provided in Kangar for the people to use.⁶⁴

In general, Raja Syed Alwi was assisted by the British Advisor and others in the PWD. Perlis had a shortage of experts in water management but the experience that the British had was utilized to build a network of modern water supplies. However, the views and ideas from the Malays were always the priority since they knew all locations in Perlis. All matters pertaining to the water supply were managed by the elected committee members appointed by the PWD. Hence, C. R. Savege was appointed as the assistant engineer for water supply, and he was responsible for the development of water supply in Perlis. In December 1924, C.R. Savege was tasked to execute the construction of water supply sources from the Perlis-Setul area to Bandar Kangar. The initial phase of this construction was completed at the end of the year and the state hoped that a modern water supply could be established in 1925. The new water supply system would be able to cater to the need of residents in Kangar since previously they had to rely on water taken from a well located half a mile from the town. In 1926, 38 miles of river and canals were clean and five irrigation dams from Sungai Arau, Batu Lada, Arau, Besri, and Bukit Ketri were completed. Improvement work and deepening of the river were carried out in Simpang Ampat-Arau and Utan Aji canals. Pipes were installed along the roads heading to Kangar and eventually, the water supply to Kangar began in 1926.

C.R. Savege tasks were assisted by F.W. Capper during the last two months of the project. Capper acted as an observer who had once carried out research on water supply in Sungai Petani Kedah. Other than Savege, P.H.V. Hanitsch who was an assistant engineer was also involved in monitoring the development of the water supply project for six months and it ended in December 1926. He was later replaced by G.C. Hesketh who was also an assistant engineer with PWD for the Federated Malay States. In fact, an engineer from Kedah was also invited once a month to the site to give advise on matters pertaining to the water supply to PWD of Perlis. His service was paid monthly every time he came to visit and monitor the progress of the water supply and basic facilities development which were carried out by PWD.⁶⁷

In addition, the Sanitary Board⁶⁸ and local leaders also played their own roles in contributing to the development of water supply at main locations in Perlis. They had provided valuable information to the relevant authorities on

the current situation of water supply or problems encountered such as the lack of water, leakage, interrupted water supply, diseases, and others. These were done to ensure that the water supply remained in excellent and satisfactory condition until the water reached the people. In fact, the Sanitary Board also acted as the body which organized the payment for service charges to water supply from the public and this increased the efficiency of water supply management from time to time.⁶⁹ In October 1926, Raja Syed Alwi officiated the Kangar Water Supply Plan which was the first of its kind to be implemented in Perlis. Hence, the plan became a significant benchmark in Perlis history even though the state took a very long time to accomplish the next plan.⁷⁰

D) Paddy Plantation and Tin Mining

Perlis was agricultural land, but its revenue depended on paddy plantation and tin mining. According to *al-Tarikh Salasilah Negeri Kedah*, agricultural activity began in the 17th century when Kota Indera Kayangan was named the capital city and Sultan Dhiauddin was well-known in paddy planting. Canals which were built during his era were not meant for him to use to travel to his wives' places only. In fact, the people benefitted from these sources of water especially for paddy planting activity. Thick, tropical jungle lined the rivers, so the locals were asked to cut down trees. As a result, the people explored new areas and ventured into paddy planting along the canals.⁷¹ Paddy planting activity used water from the same resources continuously until the reign of Raja Syed Alwi.

Generally, the production of paddy/rice was one of the main contributions to the state's revenue for Perlis even when there were some problems during flood. Through the profit gained from superior and constant quality of paddy, the state managed to generate a good income. According to Perlis Annual Report in 1921, paddy was the biggest contributor to the revenue made by the state. For example, in five years from 1917 to 1921, yields from paddy were good and the export of paddy had also increased that year. Paddy plantation involved 50,174 relongs as compared to 2,149 relongs for rubber plants.⁷² P.S. William who was an acting officer and later became the British Advisory in 9 Mei 1925 stated that excellent production of paddy was found in rural areas as compared to the coast. The seed to replant paddy must be carefully selected as they were imported from the Paddy Research Department in Titi Serong, Krian and it was proven that these seeds produced the best outcome.⁷³

Since paddy plantation was progressive during this period, there was an increase in the number of applications for agricultural lands. Most applicants were locals, Malays from Kedah and some came from the Federated Malay States such as Perak, and the Mendailing from Sumatra and Bugis.⁷⁴ Areas for paddy plantation grew and more production was recorded. Consequently,

Perlis was able to provide enough supply of rice for its people and exported the rest of the paddy and rice at the amount of 150,000 *pikuls* per year.⁷⁵

Other than paddy plantation, mining activities were active during the reign of Raja Syed Alwi since the tax collected from tin provided an added value to the state's income. Before 1900, the Kaki Bukit area in Perlis was once a limestone area sandwiched between the border of the Kingdom of Siam dan Perlis was just a small village. However, after a few mines were discovered, the area gained attention from miners. The first Malay who was involved in tin mining industry was Mr. Nayan (Tauke Nyan) who hailed from Kampung Kachor, Salang Area, Perak and Madam Aminah from Wang Kelian. They mined tin at Sungai Pelarit which was located close to Gua Kelam. When Raja Syed Alwi was in power, the mining activities continued to progress. Some miners came to Perlis on ships to Tebing Tinggi and continued their journey through Padang Malau to Kaki Bukit in 1906. Kong Fatt was the first Chinese to start mining at Kaki Bukit after purchasing the land from Mr. Nayan. He established his own company called "Syarikat Perlombongan Kong Fatt" at Sungai Pelarit close to Gua Kelam and all miners where the Chinese known as 'Sinkheh' (newcomers) who came from China on their own. They worked based on contracts with payment between RM 2.00 and RM 4.00 a month at three mines areas in Kaki Bukit namely the ones in Gua Kelam, Gua Ikan and Wang Mu. Gradually, Gua Kelam became famous among Chinese miners having learned that the tin from these areas was of high quality.

Paddy plantation which was worked on by the Malays and tin mining by the Chinese had contributed to the state revenue from year to year. For instance, in 1927, the amount of paddy harvested from 1926-1927 was at 9,655,939 *gantangs* per year as compared to the amount of the previous year which was 9,005,688 *gantangs*. As for the price of tin, the price of export of this mineral was 9234-9367 *pikuls* per year and in the years between 1927-1928 compared to 5551 *pikuls* for the year before that.⁷⁷ However, the amount of harvest and export of paddy as well as rice was not fixed since it largely depended on the cultivation conditions which were sometimes damaged due to flood, drought, plant diseases, and buffaloes. For example, in 1929-1930, the amount of paddy harvest began to decline due to drought in Perlis. Thus, the ruler had provided aids or assistance to the poor in certain districts and this had never happened in the history of Perlis. The same goes for the price of tin export which was \$ 100 perpikuls at the beginning to \$71 perpikuls at the end of 1930 and \$ 51.12 at the end of 1931 due to a worldwide decline in tin prices. The low price of tin had affected the state's income.⁷⁸

The increase in these two commodities were clearly seen in 1936 and the next following years within the Raja Syed Alwi era.⁷⁹ In 1939, a new tin mine was discovered by the raw mineral was not able to be taken out and exported since there was the rule of International Quota Release. By the time Second World War and the next following years, tin was easily exported, and

this generated lucrative income for Perlis.⁸⁰ Although the Chinese miners were at Kaki Bukit and the Malays were at the villages cultivating paddy, the situation in Perlis was peaceful. Peace was extremely important as it could guarantee economic stability in Perlis and generated more production for the state. Other economic activities such as the sale of opium, not imposing an import duty for sugar and tobacco as well as others which were all contributed to the largest amount of income in 1936 and the next following years as the state was ruled by Raja Syed Alwi.⁸¹

Conclusion

In conclusion, there were many developments and modernisation which were initiated by Raja Syed Alwi during his reign. Among them were modernisation in economy and administration such as solving the financial problems of Perlis and establishing the Perlis State Council. In socio-economic development, Raja Syed Ali had empowered Malay education, improved health facilities, provided public facilities, and increased paddy farming and tin mining. Although the early stages of Raja Syed Alwi's reign had struggled financially, with careful planning he had managed by making improvements in the socio-economic aspects in Perlis.

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