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The First Sultan of Sarawak and His Links to Brunei and the Sambas Dynasty, 1599–1826: A Little-known Pre-Brooke History

IB LARSEN*

The first Sultan of Sarawak, Sultan Tengah Manga, was appointed by his brother Sultan Abdul Jalilul Akbar of Brunei in 1599. According to tradition no sultan was appointed after Sultan Tengah Manga's death in 1641, and Sarawak was ruled by four local datu from his death until the arrival of the first White Rajah in 1842. However, not much information exists to confirm this tradition. Sultan Tengah Manga's son, Radin Suleiman, became the first Sultan of Sambas, an area which neighbours Sarawak to the southwest. This article revisits the sparse existing information on the rule of Sarawak after 1641 and on the history of the sultanate of Sambas. Special emphasis is given to assessing whether Radin Suleiman and his successors might have continued to exercise authority over Sarawak from their new base in Sambas. The article does not provide a clear answer to this question, but it concludes that Sambas' influence on Sarawak was considerably stronger than has been generally credited.

Introduction

The northwestern corner of the island of Borneo is divided into a northeastern section—the original Sarawak area, encompassing the Sarawak, Samarahan and Lundu River catchments—and a southwestern section encompassing the old sultanate of Sambas in what is now Indonesian Kalimantan.

The division continues right to the northwestern-most tip of the island—Tanjung Datu. The areas are so close that if not for the Penrissen mountain range that separates them, the division would not seem logical. In the 1800s the division became permanently settled as the main division between British and Dutch interests in Borneo, the border following the watershed.

It is possible that the relations between these two areas were actually much closer historically than previously thought.

The royal palace in Sambas, although rebuilt over the years, has served as a residence for the sultans of Sambas for 300 years. The last sultan was assassinated by the Japanese in 1943, but until very recently, the dowager queen after the late Sultan Pengiran Ratu H. Winata, Istrinia Endang Sri Muningsih, and her son, Pangeran Ratu Muhammad Tarhan, who ascended the throne on 2 February 2008, lived in the palace. They have now moved to a new house built just adjacent to the palace grounds.

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MAP 1. Sambas and Sarawak around 1840. Map designed by Jeffery Chiak, Inovatif Media Asia Sdn Bhd. The Sarawak part drawn after Vernon Mullen, *The Story of Sarawak*, Oxford University Press, 1960. (Chinese translation by Chu Hung Sheng, Borneo Literature Bureau, n.d.). The Sambas part drawn after topographic map. Historical sites in Sambas inserted after own GPS readings.

A genealogy of the royal family displayed in the palace states that the progenitor of the Sambas dynasty was Sultan Tengah Manga of Sarawak, who was assassinated in Santubong, Sarawak in 1641. In Sarawak it is related that Sultan Tengah Manga was the only Sultan of Sarawak until James Brooke was appointed as the first white Rajah by the Sultan of Brunei in 1842.

According to the official history, no Sultan of Sarawak was appointed after the assassination of Sultan Tengah Manga. Instead, four hereditary Malay chieftains governed Sarawak semi-autonomously.¹ The official story explains that Sarawak remained under the authority of the Brunei Sultan. However, nothing is really known about how Sarawak was governed by the Brunei sultanate after Sultan Tengah Manga, but 'presumably there was an equivalent of a governor then'.²

The genealogical table on the wall of the Sambas palace states that the son of Sultan Tengah Manga was Radin Suleiman, who married Mas Ayu Bungsu, a

¹ Datu Petinggi, Datu Shahbandar, Datu Amar and Datu Temenggong (Awang Mohd Jamil (1995: 3); Urai Riza Fahmi (2011: 3). Other sources state that three *datu* were appointed (Datu Patinggi, Datu Bandar and Datu Temenggong); see Reece (2004: 13).

² Rozan (2008). John Walker recalls that Brooke recorded (diaries or letters) that the *datu* received their titles from Brunei. J. H. Walker to Valerie Mashman (pers. comm).



FIG. 1 Royal palace, Sambas

daughter of Ratu Sapudak, a descendant of the Majapahit kings and Hindu ruler of the Sambas kingdom.³ Radin Suleiman became the first Muslim ruler of Sambas with the title Sri Paduka al-Sultan Tuanku Muhammad Safiuddin I.

Did Radin Suleiman give up his father's claim to Sarawak? Or did he continue to exercise authority over Sarawak from his new capital in Sambas? During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Brunei sultanate was severely weakened due to the increasing European control of trade, facilitating the continuous influence of the descendants of Sultan Tengah Manga on Sarawak. Its main settlement at Santubong was located just 100 kilometres from the capital of Sambas.

Some old maps of Borneo do indicate the western part of Sarawak as encompassed in the sultanate of Sambas. Francis Valentyn's map of Borneo, printed in Amsterdam around 1725, seems clearly to place the western part of Sarawak under 'T Koninkryk van Sambas' (Sambas Kingdom).

Even though Sarawak was definitely no longer in close association with Sambas in the mid-1800s, it may not just be a simple mistake that a mid-nineteenth century map still showed Sarawak (Kuching) as encompassed in the sultanate of Sambas.

This article explores whether traces of Sambas influence on Sarawak can be identified. This would indicate that the lack of information about Brunei rule over Sarawak reflects the fact that Sarawak was under the influence of Sambas during this period.⁴

Available publications on Sarawak history have been scrutinized for the purpose, supplemented with visits to Sambas in August 2004 and May 2010 and correspondence with relevant persons in Sarawak and Sambas. The reference persons in Sambas include the sultan's mother, Istrinia Endang Sri Muningsih, and Urai Riza Fahmi, who is a fifth-generation descendant of the great Sultan Muhammad Tsafiuddin II of Sambas (1866–1922) and a member of the Majelis Adat Istiadat Kesultanan Sambas (Tetua Adat). This council was appointed by the Council of

³ Buyers.

⁴ Some oral traditions, however, attribute the origin of Sarawak royalty to Raja Jarom, probably of Minangkabau descent. Raja Jarom arrived in Sarawak at the time Sultan Tengah died and settled in the Samarahan area. Oral information to the author from various sources. *See also* footnote 12.

Elders to advise the present sultan, Pangeran Ratu Muhammad Tarhan (who ascended the throne on 2 February 2008) until he came of age (17 years old) in 2011.

Sultan Tengah Manga, the First Sultan of Sarawak

Tengah Manga (Pengiran Tengah Ibnu Sultan Muhamad Hassan) was the second son of Sultan Muhamad Hasan of Brunei. When the sultan died, his eldest son became the next Sultan of Brunei, but the younger brother, Tengah Manga, also claimed the throne, on the grounds that he was born while his father was sultan.⁵

The elder brother anticipated the situation and decided to appoint Tengah Manga as sultan over Sarawak, one of the peripheral areas controlled by the sultanate. Tengah Manga accepted the appointment and became Sultan Ibrahim Ali Omar Shah of Sarawak in 1599. In Sarawak he established his capital at Santubong⁶ 'by building a palace and a fort around it'.⁷

Not long after the appointment, Sultan Tengah left for a trip to visit his aunt who was married to the Sultan of Johor. Before he left he appointed four *datu* to govern the country.⁸ On the return journey to Sarawak he was blown off course by a hurricane, and ended up in Sukadana in West Kalimantan, which was ruled by a Javanese Hindu king who had just embraced Islam and adopted the name Sultan Muhammad Tsafiuddin. In Sukadana Sultan Tengah married the sultan's sister, Ratu Surya Kusuma, who gave birth to their first son, Radin Suleiman, followed by four other children.⁹

From Sukadana Sultan Tengah and his family continued back up the coast towards Sambas. He settled and built houses in Kuala Bangun on the Sambas River. The Hindu king of Sambas, Ratu Sepudak, who resided in Kota Lama, located further up the Sambas Besar River, welcomed Sultan Tengah, who then started preaching Islam in the kingdom.

After his eldest son Radin Suleiman was married to the daughter of Ratu Sepudak, Tengah Manga left for Matan with his wife and four other children before eventually returning to Sarawak.¹⁰ Just after his arrival in Sarawak, Sultan Tengah was assassinated by his escort at Batu Buaya, Santubong, in 1641.¹¹ He was buried at Santubong, where his mausoleum, constructed in 1995, still stands.^{12, 13}

⁵ Awang Mohd Jamil (1995: 1).

⁶ Some sources locate the capital at Sg Bedil, just across the river from the present capital of Sarawak, Kuching (*see* Indra (2010)). In Sg Bedil Besar there is a mosque with a grave inside. Many Sambas descendants in Sarawak visit this mosque for pilgrimage (personal information).

⁷ Awang Mohd Jamil (1995: 3); Urai Riza Fahmi (2011: 3).

⁸ Datu Petinggi, Datu Shahbandar, Datu Amar and Datu Temenggong. Awang Mohd Jamil (1995: 3); Urai Riza Fahmi (2011: 3).

⁹ Urai Riza Fahmi (2011: 4). According to Christopher Buyers, Ratu Surya Kusuma was the daughter of Paduka Sri Sultan Muhammad Taj Ud-din, Sultan of Sukadana and Panemban of Landak. *See also* Ritchie (2000a).

¹⁰ Awang Mohd Jamil (1995: 9).

¹¹ *Ibid.*; Urai Riza Fahmi (2011: 6).

¹² It is questioned if the mausoleum is actually the grave of Sultan Tengah. Local tradition

Sarawak after Sultan Tengah Manga

Sarawak's Relations with Brunei and Sambas, 1641–1826

Very little information exists on the rule of Sarawak during the 200-year period after Sultan Tengah Manga's assassination in 1641 up to 1826 when the Sultan of Brunei sent the Pengiran Mahkota to Sarawak to re-establish Brunei rule in the territory. A number of sources describe the situation in Sarawak from that time.

Veth¹⁴ states, in his 1854 work, that the half-brother of the Sambas sultan, Pengiran Anom, who was earlier widely characterized as a piratical chief,¹⁵ at the end of the 1700s 'became associated with the Illanun raiders and others which included those from Bangka, Sarawak, Brunei and Pasir'.¹⁶ This citation seems to indicate that Sarawak at that time had become a separate entity, separate from both Sambas and Brunei.

Walker states that 'there is circumstantial evidence that Datu Temenggong Mersal¹⁷ was allied with Sambas. He was based at Talang-Talang and on the Lundu coast; areas that Raffles believed were bases for Sambas marauding.'¹⁸ He further states that a prince from Sambas tried to collect revenue in Sematan, a coastal town west of Lundu, as late as 1862.¹⁹ Close relations between Sambas and Sarawak can also be inferred from the letter from Burns to Raffles dated 12 February 1811, in which he writes that the ship the *Commence* had been burned by '*Pangeran Samewda of Sarawak, a relative of the sultan of Sambas*'²⁰ (my italics). The Pangeran 'cut off' the British ship at Satang Island, close to Santubong, the capital of Sarawak. The crew were sold as slaves in Brunei.²¹

places his grave closer to the foot of the mountain. Own interviews. See also *Borneo Post* (2010).

¹³ Bapak Hasan, the nephew of Sultan Muhammad Mulia Ibrahim Tsafiuddin, the grandfather of the present sultan of Sambas, gave the following oral tradition on Tengah Manga: Rajah Tengah Manga returned to Sarawak with the intent to appoint his son, Suleiman, as his successor as ruler of Sarawak. But before he could do so, he was assassinated by his military chieftain to prevent this from happening. His son Suleiman realized the betrayal, and was determined to kill the chieftain. He followed the chieftain's traces all the way to Sabah, where he finally confronted and killed him. He then returned down the coast; he did not stop at Santubong, but continued past Tanjung Datu and settled on Temajuh, a small island off the Kalimantan coast, where he founded the Sambas dynasty.

¹⁴ Veth (1854: 368). Here after Smith (2007).

¹⁵ The truth of his legacy as a pirate is strongly questioned today. See Smith (2007); Smith (2009).

¹⁶ Smith (2007).

¹⁷ One of the three pre-Brooke era Malay *datu* referred to above.

¹⁸ J. H. Walker to Valerie Mashman (pers. comm.).

¹⁹ Walker (2002: 166).

²⁰ Reece and Smith (2006: 33). Smith (2007) states that it was seized by the 'Pirates of Sarawak in conjunction with those of Sambas'. It is possible that 'Pangeran Samewda of Sarawak' was Pengiran Anom; see Relations between Radin Suleiman and his successors and Sarawak, below.

²¹ Reece (2004: 14).

Even though the act was performed by a Sarawak Pangeran, the British navy took revenge by bombarding the city of Sambas in 1812,²² implying that the British were in no doubt about the alliance. Runciman states that Raffles in 1813, after the bombardment of Sambas, sent Captain Robert Garnham as a special commissioner to the Rajah of Sarawak, with a letter warning him against piracy, and informed him that if it was not stopped, bombardments would not be restricted to Sambas.²³ In 1814 Leyden mentions Sarawak as the 'headquarters of the piratical chief'.²⁴

However, there are also a few records relating Sarawak to Brunei. A Dutch report from the 1820s states that there 'were about a hundred Malays in Sarawak, most of them pirates. The Chinese had only three houses, while two Brunei Pengerans carried out the Government and extract three koyans of padi and two pikuls of birds'-nests a year from the local dayaks.'²⁵

In 1831 the Dutch resident in Sambas proposed to the East Indian government that Sambas should acquire from Brunei Lundu, Sematan, Sarawak and Sadoud. The sultan sent an envoy to Brunei to negotiate the transfer.²⁶ The purpose was to stop the rampant smuggling, especially of the monopolized salt, from Sarawak to Sambas.²⁷

The smuggling was facilitated by the fact that 'Sarawak had easy and direct communication with the interior of Sambas'.²⁸ The main border crossing to Dutch Kalimantan from Sarawak was through Serikin, west of Bau, which was located on the direct route from Kuching to Sambas! It seems that contacts between Sarawak and Sambas had been frequent, not only by sea, but also overland. The connection to Pontianak further south is of a much later date.

It seems that Sarawak at the time of the Mahkota's arrival had, to a lesser or greater degree, become a separate entity. Even though a few references still link Sarawak to Brunei, it seems likely that relations with Sambas were as strong as those with Brunei.

Sarawak's Relations with Brunei and Sambas after 1826

In the early nineteenth century antimony ore was found at Siniawan up the Sarawak River, providing a potential new source of income for the declining Brunei sultanate. In 1826 the Sultan of Brunei sent the Pengiran Mahkota to Sarawak 'to re-establish Brunei control over Sarawak and to exploit the deposits'.²⁹ He settled at Kuching, downstream on the Sarawak River, which since then became the capital of Sarawak.

²² Buyers.

²³ Runciman (1992: 35). It is possible that the Rajah of Sarawak was Pengiran Anom; see Relations between Radin Suleiman and his successors and Sarawak, below.

²⁴ Irwin (1967: 73).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Walker (2002: 26).

²⁷ Irwin (1967: 70, 73-4).

²⁸ Ibid.: 69.

²⁹ Runciman (1992: 60); Walker (2002: 26).

Does this mark the continuation of a Brunei presence in the area? The reaction to the Pengiran Mahkota's arrival in Sarawak may indicate if this was the case. From subsequent events it seems clear that the Malay *datu* did not accept the supremacy of the Pengiran Mahkota and the Brunei Sultan.

The *datu* had moved their capital further up the Sarawak River to Lidah Tanah at the confluence of the Sarawak Kiri and Kanan rivers to be closer to the antimony³⁰ and built fortresses at, among others, Lidah Tanah and Siniawan. From here they started an uprising against the Mahkota in 1836.³¹

Talib states that 'the thriving antimony trade appeared to have been the reason for the sultan's [of Brunei] resumption of control of an area, which had come under the influence of the Sultan of Sambas'.³² Barley simply states that the Malay *datu* were alleged to be in alliance with the Sultan of Sambas.³³ Ranjit Singh, Walker and Irwin all state that the Sultan of Sambas supplied the *datu* with arms and ammunition.³⁴ Pybus states that none of the *datu* wanted the rule of the Sultan of Brunei.³⁵ Walker writes that 'Sarawak was subject to competing ties with Sambas'.³⁶ In May 1839 the rebels sent a message to the Dutch Assistant Resident in Sambas stating that they wished to come under Dutch (Sambas) rule.³⁷

Walker finds that the uprising was 'a struggle between the Malay elites from Sambas, Brunei and Sarawak for control of the antimony'. He further states that the Sambas government wrote to the Pengiran Mahkota to offer assistance in the development of the deposits, to be sure to gain control of the antimony whatever the outcome of the uprising. The letter remained unanswered.

Walker further writes that the 1836 uprising was provoked by the Brunei nobleman Usop, the father-in-law of the Sultan of Brunei's son. Usop had proposed to transfer Sarawak to the brother of the Sultan of Sambas for a sum of money³⁸ but instead the Brunei Sultan sent his uncle, Muda Hashim, to Sarawak to suppress the uprising when the Pengiran Mahkota failed to do so.³⁹ Runciman states that

³⁰ Runciman (1992: 59) states that Lidah Tanah succeeded Katubong as capital when this town was sacked by the Saribas Dayaks in 1830. Walker (2002: 24) also has Katubong as capital, but in his version the town was contemporary with Lidah Tanah.

³¹ Walker (2002: 26).

³² Talib (1999: 3).

³³ Barley (2002: 40).

³⁴ Singh (1984: 48); Walker (2002: 29); Irwin (1967: 74). Irwin refers to an 1841 letter from Rajah James Brooke to Templer.

³⁵ Pybus (1996: 8).

³⁶ Walker (2002: 26).

³⁷ Ibid.: 29.

³⁸ Runciman (1992: 26); Singh (1984: 48).

³⁹ Pengiran Mohamad Salleh, a Sambas royalty who had been sent to Brunei to re-establish connections with the sultanate, was summoned back to Brunei from Sambas by the Brunei sultan around 1820, and was conferred the title he later used in Sarawak – Pengiran Indera Mahkota (Chang 1999: 28). A number of explanations for the lack of the Pengiran Mahkota's sincerity have been proposed, including issues related to the order of succession at the Brunei court. However, it is possible that the Pengiran Mahkota's relations with Sambas, from where he originally came, were still warm. When Raja Muda Hashim, with the

Pengiran Usop promised the 'great Malay family of Sarawak' help from the Sultan of Sambas for the uprising.⁴⁰

To defeat the uprising, Muda Hashim fortified Sekundis, cutting the insurgents' supply line from Sambas.⁴¹ Following the surrender, the Malay leaders of the uprising, Datu Patinggi Abdul Gabur and Datu Temenggong Mersal, withdrew to the protection of Sambas.⁴² Only when James Brooke interfered in the conflict on the Brunei side from 1841 and finally quelled it did relations between Sarawak and Brunei become clearly settled.⁴³

The reactions of the various parties after the discovery of antimony and the arrival of the Pengiran Mahkota do not support the position that Sarawak was under Brunei before this event.

The Sambas Sultanate

It is also desirable to review the history and the rule of the sultanate of Sambas to try to identify possible relations with Sarawak.

Unfortunately, most of the royal Sambas files went up in flames when the Japanese occupation forces burnt the Resident's office to the ground during the Second World War. Most of the existing documents are re-written versions of a record made by Sultan Umar Aqam Uddin I (1708–32).⁴⁴ A copy of this document was handed over to the author by Riza Fahmi. The family of Astaman Ahmad, whose grandfather was the parasol bearer for Sultan Muhammad Ibrahim Astaman, had for generations held an old written history of the sultanate. Unfortunately the original has now vanished, but he kept two old typed copies. One of these copies was also handed over to the author.

Sultan Tengah Manga in Sambas

After residing in Sukadana on the west coast of Kalimantan for some years, Sultan Tengah Manga together with his wife Puteri Surya Kesuma and their five children, of whom the eldest was Radin Suleiman,⁴⁵ left Sukadana for Sambas with forty

assistance of the first White Rajah, James Brooke, finally managed to defeat the uprising, the Pengiran Mahkota hurried off to Sambas to seek help (Payne 1960: 48). Hahn (1953: 205) states that in 1855 the Mahkota was in Sambas 'cooking up anti-Brooke plots for the future'. The Mahkota later passed away and was buried at Lubok Madung in Sambas (information from Riza Fahmi).

⁴⁰ Runciman (1992: 59).

⁴¹ Walker (2002: 41).

⁴² *Ibid.*: 43.

⁴³ When James Brooke started interfering in the uprising, he received a clear and threatening letter from the Dutch Assistant-Resident in Sambas to mind his own business and get his nose out of Sarawak affairs (Irwin 1967: 100).

⁴⁴ Information from Riza Fahmi. This original document is therefore also the basic source of most of the historical information which follows.

⁴⁵ Urai Riza Fahmi (2011: 4). According to Awang Mohd Jamil (1995: 6–7), Radin Suleiman was born in Kota Bangun.

ships.⁴⁶ Sultan Tengah Manga had been told about Sambas by his aunt during his earlier visit to Johor.⁴⁷

They settled at Kota Bangun at the confluence of the Sambas and Sambas Besar rivers⁴⁸ where he built a cluster of villages.⁴⁹ Many years later, when Radin Suleiman left Kota Lama as he feared for his safety, he settled at his birthplace here for a year.⁵⁰ A few houses and a newly renovated mosque still remain. However, some beams, a preacher's stick, an old Chinese jar and a ceramic lamp from the old mosque are the only historical remains.

At that time the Sambas kingdom was still Hindu, a remnant from the old Majapahit kingdom. The capital, Kota Lama, was located further up the Sambas Besar River. Sultan Tengah Manga was welcomed by the king, Ratu Sepudak, and started preaching Islam without objections from him.⁵¹ Kota Bangun soon became a centre for Islam.⁵² His son, Radin Suleiman, married the daughter of Ratu Sepudak, Puteri Mas Ayu Bongsu, and soon afterwards they had a son, who was named Radin Bima. Later, during the reign of Ratu Sepudak's successor Kesuma Yudha, Radin Suleiman was awarded the title of *wazir*.⁵³ After his son's marriage, Sultan Tengah Manga left his son and daughter-in-law in Kota Lama and moved to Matan with his wife and four other children before the family eventually returned to Sarawak where he was assassinated, as described above.

Radin Suleiman and Radin Bima in Sambas

The presence of Radin Suleiman in Kota Lama signalled the end of the era of Kota Lama as capital of the Sambas kingdom. Ratu Kesuma Yudha appointed his brother Pengiran Aryo Mangkurat as his first *wazir* (prime minister), responsible for matters inside the palace, and Radin Suleiman as his second *wazir*, responsible for matters outside the palace.⁵⁴ Radin Suleiman continued his father's preaching for Islam and he attained many followers. Aryo Mangkurat was worried about Radin Suleiman's increasing popularity and trouble arose. When Pengiran Aryo Mangkurat killed one of Radin Suleiman's ministers and the king did not take any action against him, Radin Suleiman realised that Kota Lama was no longer safe for him or his family, and he left.⁵⁵ He was followed not only by the Muslims, but also by many non-Muslims, leaving Kota Lama a quiet place.⁵⁶

Today this former capital is gone; only a few graves are still visible, the most dominant one being that of Ratu Sepudak. The grave is currently being renovated

⁴⁶ Urai Riza Fahmi (2011: 5).

⁴⁷ Ibid.: 4.

⁴⁸ Ibid.: 5.

⁴⁹ Awang Mohd Jamil (1995: 6–7).

⁵⁰ Urai Riza Fahmi (2011: 8).

⁵¹ Awang Mohd Jamil (1995: 7).

⁵² Urai Riza Fahmi (2011: 5).

⁵³ Awang Mohd Jamil (1995: 7–8).

⁵⁴ Urai Riza Fahmi (2011: 6); Muhammed Shafiuddin (1903).

⁵⁵ Urai Riza Fahmi (2011: 7); Muhammed Shafiuddin (1903).

⁵⁶ Awang Mohd Jamil (1995: 10).

and rebuilt as a traditional Muslim burial site—a little odd considering that Ratu Sepudak quite certainly was a Hindu. The old burial mound can be still seen underneath the new Islamic structure. Remains of wooden structures are still visible at the side of the mound. A little further away the old waterway for mooring ships now merely resembles an idyllic forest lake. The area is currently being drained and a major drainage canal was built three years ago. Piles of broken seventeenth-century Chinese porcelain and numerous eroded old hardwood building poles appear as the drainage work progresses, but they will disappear when the area is drained and oxygen enters the soil.

After resting for a year at his birthplace, Kota Bangun, Radin Suleiman, his family and followers continued up the Sambas Kecil River, past the current Sambas royal town and sailed further up the Subah River to Kota Bandir, where they settled. After two years Patinggi Bantilan arrived at Kota Bandir as a messenger for the king of Sambas, Ratu Kesuma Yudha. Patinggi Bantilan informed Radin Suleiman that Ratu Kesuma Yudha could no longer face his brother Aryo Mangkurat, who had seized power in Kota Lama. Ratu Kesuma Yudha and a number of his followers wanted to leave Kota Lama to join Radin Suleiman. He urged Radin Suleiman not to return to his father's sultanate, Sarawak,⁵⁷ and informed him that Ratu Kesuma Yudha would declare his loyalty to Radin Suleiman, and hand over the power of the kingdom to him.⁵⁸ Radin Suleiman accepted and met with Ratu Kesuma Yudha in Kota Bangun.⁵⁹ The king then handed over the power of the kingdom to Radin Suleiman and, as a sign of loyalty, handed over to him as insignia five mini-cannons which are now kept at the Sambas royal palace.⁶⁰

Radin Suleiman then built a capital at Lubok Madung, a short distance from the present Sambas royal town up the Teberrau River.⁶¹ Ratu Kesuma Yudha settled with his followers at the Selakau River.⁶² Pengiran Aryo Mangkurat, finding his capital Kota Lama a deserted place, regretted his actions and apologized to Radin Suleiman. He and his followers then joined Radin Suleiman in Lubok Madung. Radin Suleiman was then crowned around 1631⁶³ as the first Sultan of Sambas with the name Sultan Muhammad Tsafiuddin I.

After Radin Suleiman had ruled Sambas from Lubok Madung for fifteen years he stepped down and pronounced his son Radin Bima as the second Sultan of

⁵⁷ Information from Riza Fahmi.

⁵⁸ Urai Riza Fahmi (2011: 8).

⁵⁹ Muhammed Shafiuddin (1903).

⁶⁰ According to Muhammed Shafiuddin two cannons were handed over. The mini-cannons are allegedly magical; sometimes one of the daggers disappears, but it always returns (information from Riza Fahmi).

⁶¹ Urai Riza Fahmi (2011: 10).

⁶² Muhammed Shafiuddin (1903). The Selakau Dayaks, a community located between Sematan and Lundu in western Sarawak trace their roots to Kota Lama in Sambas (Ritchie (2000b); SSC (2002)).

⁶³ Urai Riza Fahmi (2011: 14); Awang Mohd Jamil (1995: 12). The year stated by the sources for the coronation seems too early as it is ten years before Sultan Tengah Manga returned to Sarawak from Sambas, and fifteen years before the birth of Radin Bima (according to the

Sambas with the name Sultan Muhammad Tajuddin.⁶⁴ Shortly after succeeding to power, Radin Bima moved his capital to its present location at Mauara Ulakan at the confluence of the Subah and Terenggau rivers, the merged rivers becoming the Sambas Kecil River.

Relations between Radin Suleiman and his Successors and Sarawak

Radin Suleiman had become Sultan of Sambas. But what became of his father's title of Sultan of Sarawak? Radin Suleiman had considered going back to Sarawak after he left Kota Lama, so no doubt he felt himself related to that place.

To inherit his father's title of Sultan of Sarawak, it would be expected that Radin Suleiman would go to the Sultan of Brunei to obtain confirmation of the title. Did he do so? Although there are clear records that his son Radin Bima did so, the Sambas files—according to Riza Fahmi—have no clear record of such a visit to Brunei by Radin Suleiman. However, it seems likely that such files exist, even though the stories are a little blurred. According to a Brunei record, Radin Suleiman only sent a messenger to his uncle, Sultan Abdul Jalilul Akhbar of Brunei, to obtain the title 'Sultan'.⁶⁵ But it then continues that 'the arrival of Radin Suleiman to Brunei' was well received, and that the title of Sultan was given to Radin Suleiman in a great ceremony, attended by the Brunei Sultan. Later, the record states that his son Radin Bima 'followed the same ceremony as his father did, i.e. go into procession to Brunei'. So probably it was not only a messenger, but Radin Suleiman himself, who visited Brunei to obtain the title. Christopher Buyers, in his 'Royal Ark', even has a date for the event, 20 August 1630, although this date almost certainly is too early.⁶⁶

His son Radin Bima certainly did go to Brunei.⁶⁷ The spears which were given to Radin Bima by the Sultan of Brunei as insignia are still exhibited at the Royal Palace in Sambas. Awang Mohd Jamil explains that Radin Bima was awarded many of the royal insignias of office by the Sultan of Brunei during his visit.⁶⁸

The next question then is, for what area did the Sultan of Brunei confirm the Sultan title for Radin Suleiman and Radin Bima; and why did the two first Sambas sultans seek confirmation by the Sultan of Brunei? The Sambas sultanate traces its descent from the Hindu Sambas kingdom, which again traces its descent from the Hindu Majapahit empire, and not from Brunei.⁶⁹ So the Brunei Sultan would have

same sources), and Radin Bima was allegedly born while Radin Suleiman was still in Kota Lama.

⁶⁴ Awang Mohd Jamil (1995: 12).

⁶⁵ Awang Mohd Jamil (1995: 12); Rozan (2009).

⁶⁶ Buyers.

⁶⁷ Urai Riza Fahmi (2011: 14); Muhammed Shafiuddin (1903).

⁶⁸ Awang Mohd Jamil (1995: 13).

⁶⁹ Radin Suleiman was further titled Sultan Muhammed Tsafiuddin I after his father-in-law, Sultan Muhammed Tsafiuddin of Sukadana (Muhammed Shafiuddin 1903), and was thus not named after his uncle the Sultan of Brunei.

no inherited claim on the area. On the other hand, if it was also to confirm the title of Sultan of Sarawak, it makes perfect sense. A small signal that points in that direction could be that in Brunei Radin Bima obtained the title of Sultan Anom— which he never used in Sambas.⁷⁰ Perhaps this was his title as Sultan of Sarawak.

Apart from the question of the title of Sultan, did Sambas actually consider Sarawak to be part of its territory and did it retain any ties to the area?

A number of written sources relating Sarawak to Sambas after the formation of the Sambas sultanate have been discussed above.

Many people in Sarawak, especially in the Santubong area, also trace their roots back to Sambas.⁷¹

Oral traditions from elderly Malay men, recorded in 1940, attribute the foundation of the Malay community in Sarawak to Datu Merpati,⁷² who was married to Dayang Suri, daughter of Datu Undi or Raja Jarom of Johor.⁷³ The oral tradition clearly indicates that their origins are to found on the Sambas side of Borneo:

The said Raden Dipati⁷⁴ landed on an island near Pontianak, which he called Pulau Datu, and there he called himself Datu Merpati and his wife Datu Permaisuri. Then he moved further to a Cape between Sambas and Sarawak, which he called Tanjung Datu, from there to Batu Buaya, the place situated near the mouth of the Santubong River. Later on he removed to a point near Tanjung Po, which he called Tanjung Sepang, instead of Jepang.⁷⁵

The record further elaborates that the Datu Patinggi and Datu Temenggong titles, as discussed above, derive from the sons of Datu Merpati:

Datu Merpati Jepang ... had two sons, the elder named Pateh Mengadai and the younger called Pateh Sangkona. Pateh Mengadai was proclaimed as Patinggi, and Pateh Sangkona became Temenggong of Sarawak. From these two descend the titles of Patinggi and Temenggong, which still exist in Sarawak.⁷⁶

Interesting recent research has been undertaken in Pelajau on the Oya River in Mukah District,⁷⁷ further up the coast from the original Sarawak Proper, which was confined to the area west of the Samarahan River. The genealogy of the area links the origin of the local Melanau community to Pengiran Dipati, a nephew of Radin Bima.⁷⁸ The story indicates that during the generations after Radin Suleiman the Sambas royal family expanded their territory even further up the coast from Sarawak Proper.

⁷⁰ Information from Riza Fahmi.

⁷¹ Personal information given to the author by a number of people.

⁷² Roberts (1950: 266).

⁷³ On Raja Jarom, *see also* footnote 12 above.

⁷⁴ This may be the same Raden Dipati as described below, but this cannot be confirmed.

⁷⁵ Shibli (1950: 262–3).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*: 263.

⁷⁷ Appleton (2011).

⁷⁸ Pengeran Dipa was a son of Radan Ratna Dewi, the younger brother of Radin Bima, married to Putra Ratu Mas, son of Pengeran Dipa' of Landak (Urai Riza Fahmi 2004).

According to tradition, Sambas controlled the entire coast 'until Brunei'.⁷⁹ The control of the whole northwestern tip of Borneo gave the Sambas sultanate the power to control trade in the area, and Sambas was able to demand tax on trade.⁸⁰ Ships had to anchor at a small island at Kalang Bau to settle their tax. Small forts were built all the way along the coast, including Panding Bandera, Kalang Bau and Bata.⁸¹ A Sambas cannon was found at the tip of Borneo at Tanjung Datu.⁸²

According to Riza Fahmi, manuscripts and letters in the Indonesian National Archives and in Leiden document that Sultan Muhammad Ali Tsafi Uddin (1815–28), especially before his appointment as sultan, spent most of his time in Sarawak. Some of the sources describe Sarawak as a 'hiding place', while others describe it as a 'resting place'. Daeng Eka Prayudi is more detailed about the location, stating that Pengiran Anom stayed in Lundu in 1812, suffering from malaria. During the British occupation of Sambas in 1812–13, the British commander made a courtesy call on the Sultan and Pengiran Anom. Because Pengiran Anom was in Lundu, the Sultan sent four of his *datuk kiyai* and their men to Lundu to invite Pengiran Anom and his family back to Sambas.⁸³ This story fits well with the statement referred to above by Leyden in 1814 that Sarawak was the 'headquarters of the piratical chief'.⁸⁴ Before his appointment as Sultan, the British regarded Pengiran Anom as a pirate, not recognizing the sultanate's right to collect taxes on ships.⁸⁵

While the evidence cited above does not provide conclusive proof that Sambas exercised direct control over Sarawak, it certainly proves that Sambas exercised strong influence there.

Conclusion

This article has been prepared in the search for an answer to the mystery of who ruled Sarawak after the assassination of Sultan Tengah Manga in 1641. The article does definitely not provide conclusive proof, but it does indicate that a story of absolute Brunei rule is too simplistic.

Sarawak was on the periphery of the sphere of influence of both Brunei and Sambas. At the same time, the area had little commercial interest for either party. The control of Sarawak may therefore have varied over the centuries as well as between the different parts of Sarawak. The various possible claimants for all or parts of Sarawak, at times contemporaneous, include the descendants of Pengiran Dipati from Sambas in Pelajau, the descendants of Raja Jarom in Samarahan, competing interests in Santubong, and *datu* loyal to Sambas further west in Lundu and Talang-Talang.

Sambas needed bases in western Sarawak in order to control the tip of Borneo to facilitate taxing the marine trade. This clearly increased its interest from the late

⁷⁹ Information from Astaman Ahmad and Riza Fahmi.

⁸⁰ See also Raden Kesuma (2011).

⁸¹ See also Walker's information on Datuk Temenggong Mersal at Talang-Talang and the Lundu coast above.

⁸² Information from Astaman Ahmad and Riza Fahmi.

⁸³ Prayudi (2009).

⁸⁴ Irwin (1967: 73).

⁸⁵ Smith (2007).

eighteenth century. Subsequently, the discovery of antimony in the early nineteenth century vitalized the interest from both sides until the claims in the mid-nineteenth century were finally settled with the appointment of the first White Rajah by the Sultan of Brunei.

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