



Tengku Permaisuri, Che Uteh Mariah, with her sons and daughters.

Seated (left to right) Tengku Ampuan Halijah binti Sultan Idris; Raja Kimas (wife of Raja Abdul Rashid); Raja Puteh Kalsom binti Sultan Idris (wife of Raja Chulan); Tengku Permaisuri; Raja Arbiah binti Sultan Idris (unmarried); Raja Fatimah binti Sultan Idris; Raja Mahtra (wife of Raja Harun).

Standing (left to right): Raja Chulan bin Sultan Abdullah; Raja Harun ar-Rashid bin Sultan Idris; Raja Abdul Rashid bin Sultan Idris; Raja Haji Shuib bin Sultan Idris; Raja Shahrudin bin Sultan Idris; Raja (later Sultan) Abdul Aziz.

(Photo lent by Raja Halijah binti Raja Razman)

Sultan Idris

A Personal Study

by

HUSSAIN bin MAHMUD

His Royal Highness the late Sultan Idris was born at Kampong Kuala Keboi, Kampar Perak, on the 19th June 1849. He was the third son of Bendahara, Raja Alang Iskandar (later referred to as Marhum Teja) and his mother was Che' Ken Uda Sari binti Abdul Rahman (Panglima Dalam).

"Raja Deris" as he was usually called in his youth, had one half sister, Raja Teh Mas, two full brothers, Raja Kulop Muhammad and Raja Lope Ahmad, and one half brother Raja Hasan.

He had a large family, and in the course of his life married seven times. His wives (at different times) were:

H.H. Raja Perempuan, Raja Nuteh Aishah binti Al-Marhum Sultan Yusof Sharifuddin Mudzaffar Shah (27th Sultan of Perak)

Tengku Permaisuri, Che' Uteh Mariah binti Haji Sulaiman

Sharifah Alawiyah

Sharifah Maheran

Che' Long Polam,

Che' Ngah Manah, and

Che' Suyah.

By her Highness the Raja Perempuan, HRH had issue Raja Abdul Jalil (who later became Sultan Abdul Jalil, the 29th Ruler of Perak).

By Tengku Permaisuri Uteh Mariah HRH had nine Children; namely Raja Harun ar-Rashid (Raja Kechil Sulong); Raja Abdul Rashid (Raja Bendahara); Raja Haji Shu'ib (later Engku Penglima Dalam); Raja Shaharuddin; Raja Puteh Kalsom (later titled Raja Perempuan Kechil); Raja Badariah; Raja Halijah (who later became Tengku Ampuan Selangor)

By Che' Ngah Manah HRH had three children, Raja Abdul Hamid, Raja Ngah Halimah and Raja Alang Iskandar, who later became the 30th Sultan of Perak.

By Che' Long Polam HRH had one daughter, Raja Puteh Mahiyah.

During his childhood there were as yet no schools (in the modern sense) in Perak, but Raja Deris received religious instruction including instruction in the reading of the Koran, and learned to read and write in the Jawi script. He received tuition from a number of teachers at his father's residence at Kuala Keboi, and he was an industrious and receptive student. A keen interest in the pursuit of education, and of religious education in particular, was a characteristic which His Royal Highness exhibited throughout his long life. Among those who gave him religious instruction during his childhood and in later years, the best known were Tuan Lebai Said, of Minangkabau origin, Tuan Saiyed Abdullah bin Abu Bakar al 'Atas, the Chief Kathi of Perak, Tuan Sheik Mohd Tahir Jalaluddin and Tuan Sheik Mohd Saleh, the Sheikul Islam of Perak.

For some years before his installation as Sultan, His Royal Highness began to study English and received tuition from D.H. Wise a junior administrative officer, at Kuala Kangsar, Dr. Hughes, the Medical Officer and M.E. Holmes, the Collector of Land Revenue and District Magistrate in 1888. Raja Deris showed his exceptional qualities of intellect, ability and personal integrity from his youth; as a result, he rose from obscurity to the pinnacle of royal eminence and fame, in a way which has rarely been equalled in Malay history. By his charm of manner his modesty, patience, sincerity, justice and generosity, he also became extremely popular with all sections of the public.



H.R.H. Sultan Idris, 28th Sultan of Perak.

His first step on the ladder of fortune was achieved when he was appointed in 1876 to be the Judge to examine those who were charged with complicity in the murder of Mr. J.W.W. Birch, the first British Resident of Perak. He was later appointed Chief Judge in Perak. During the murder trial, his fellow Assessors were J.G. Davidson (a lawyer) and Frank Swettenham, a young Civil Servant.

When the Perak State Council was instituted on the 10th September 1877, under the Chairmanship of Raja Muda (acting Sultan) Raja Lope Yusof, (who later became Sultan Yusof) Raja Deris was appointed to be one of the founder members, and he continued to serve on that Council for 39 years until his death in 1916. The other members of the Perak State Council at the time of its inauguration were Hugh Low, the new British Resident, Enche' Wan Hassan bin Anjang Muhamad Arif (Orang Kaya Temenggong Paduka Raja), Captain T.C.S. Speedy, Assistant Resident, Enche' Abdul Karim bin Ibrahim, a Malay leader from Selama, Captain Chung Ah Kwee the leader of the Hai San group from Taiping and Captain Chin Ah Yam, leader of the Ghi Hin group from Kamunting.

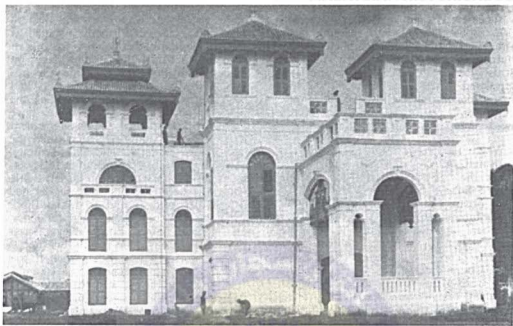
In 1883 Raja Deris was invited to assist in the settlement of a dispute over the definition of the State Boundary between Perak and Kedah, and he accompanied F.J. Brewster, a British Official, to Kedah. In the same year he visited Malacca to assist in the settlement of the dispute over the boundary between Malacca and Rembau. In 1878 Raja Deris was married to Raja Nuteh Aishah, daughter of Raja Yusof, and from that time onwards he was more and more closely associated with the court and with his father-in-law, the Regent. Sultan Yusof was elderly and in poor health and he deputed his son-in-law to carry out some of his duties.

When Sultan Yusof was finally installed as Ruler on 11th May 1887 Hugh Low, the Resident (1877 - 1889) requested the Council of State to appoint Raja Deris to be the Raja Muda, and this was unanimously approved. Sultan Yusof only lived for about two months after his installation and died on 26th July 1887. Raja Deris,

the heir apparent, was then proclaimed to be his successor. Raja Deris was then 38 years old. He was formally installed as the 28th Sultan of Perak, with the title of Sultan Idris Murshidul 'Adzam Shah, on Friday 5th April 1889. All the previous Sultans of Perak had resided and had been buried on the right bank of the Perak river. This was believed to have been in consequence of an agreement made between Sultan Muzaffar Shah the first Sultan of Perak, and Tok Temong, an influential Chief. But Sultan Idris was living on Bukit Chandan, on the left Bank, before he became Sultan and he decided to set a precedent and to make Bukit Chandan the site of the royal residence. His palace, named Istana Negara was built there in 1895 and he and his successors occupied it until 1930, when it was replaced by the present Istana Iskandariah. Sultan Idris, caused two other palaces to be built: one, which he called "*Istana Chinta Berahi*" for Her Highness the Raja Perempuan, the other called, *Istana Kasar Ma'amor*, for Tengku Permaisuri.

His Royal Highness was fond of travelling about his state both by river, by elephant and on horseback. Where ever he went he always brought back some small gift or object of interest for his wives and children. He was a keen collector of curios and articles of antiquity.

The Sultan visited England four times. The first, while he was still Bendahara in 1884; he went there with Mr. Hugh Low and Raja Mansor eldest son of the ex-Sultan Abdullah, to ask for the return of the Perak royal Regalia, which had been taken to England in 1876 after the Disturbance. He brought back all the important articles in time for them to be used at the installation of his royal father-in-law. His second visit was in 1888, at the invitation of Queen Victoria, after his proclamation as Sultan. Once again he was accompanied by Mr. Hugh Low and Raja Mansur. In 1902 the Sultan once again travelled to England to attend the Coronation of King Edward VII, but owing to the King's illness the Coronation was postponed. When he returned home in June 1902, he brought back his favourite son, Raja Alang



Istana Negara, built on Bukit Chandan, Kuala Kangsar by Sultan Idris in 1895. Demolished in 1930 to make way for the new Istana Iskandariah.

Photo: National Archives.

Iskandar. Raja Alang had spent seven years in England, five of them at Oxford, and was just 21 years of age.

The Sultan's last visit to England was made in July 1911 in order to attend the Coronation of King George V. He took his consort Tengku Permaisuri, Che' Uteh Mariah, with him and was attended by his sons, Raja Harun ar-Rashid and Raja Abdul Rashid, by Raja Chulan, (second son of the former Sultan Abdullah), together with his wife Raja Puteh Kelsom (the Sultan's daughter), and by Enche' Yeop Nordia, Toh Muda Orang Kaya Setia Bijaya Di-Raja.

One of the after effects of the Perak Disturbances was the removal of many Rajas and Territorial Chiefs, leaving the peasants without their customary patrons. It was fortunate that at this critical time the state was ruled by a Sultan who took an unrivalled interest in the welfare of his

subjects: and in consultation with the Resident, Mr. Hugh Low, the Sultan introduced laws and regulations which greatly improved the general administration. One of his earliest actions, when still Bendahara was to select and appoint new village Headmen all along the Perak river and to use them as part of a new administrative machine.

Sultan Idris took a deep and practical interest in the introduction and extension of Western Style education in his state. As early as 1887 the Sultan arranged for an English language class to be added to the Malay School in Kuala Kangsar, under a Malay Teacher, Zainal Abidin bin Sidek, from Penang. He sent one of his sons, Raja Alang Iskandar, to the only English School in Perak, situated at Taiping and in 1895 when the Resident, Mr. Frank Swettenham, went on leave, Raja Iskandar accompanied him and studied at Oxford for 5 years.



H.R.H. Sultan Idris in London with Mr. Hugh Clifford and Raja Chulan bin Sultan Abdullah outside Buckingham Palace, 1902.

Photo: National Archives.

In 1904, when it was decided to establish a Malay College in the Federated Malay States, Sultan Idris requested that it should be sited in Kuala Kangsar, and he exerted his influence to persuade Rajas and Chiefs to send their sons to the College.

He was deeply concerned about the economic condition of his Malay subjects, and took the initiative in advocating the creation of extensive Malay Reservations, in which no non-Malay could own land. As a result many areas in and near towns and some mining lands which would otherwise have been sold, were preserved in Malay ownership.



The Sultan also reviewed and revived the ancient code of Perak Court customs and procedure, and the traditional and royal titles. This work was completed, and was approved by the Council of State, in June 1905. His Royal Highness also caused all the Royal graves along the Perak river to be cleaned and restored, and appointed men to maintain them in good order in future.

After his return from England in 1911 the Sultan was indisposed and travelled to Port Dickson to rest. He made a vow, while he was there, that if he was restored to good health he would cause to be erected a State Mosque on Bukit Chandan. When His Royal Highness returned to Kuala Kangsar he gave instructions to Col Huxley, an Engineer of the Public Works Department with Architectural qualifications to prepare a plan of a handsome Mosque and the foundation stone was laid on September 26, 1913. The construction of the Mosque was delayed by the outbreak of the first World War, which made it necessary to transport Italian marble round the Coast of South Africa, and Sultan Idris died before the Mosque could be completed. It was officially opened by Sultan Abdul Jalil, the late Sultan's heir, in 1917. Sultan Idris gave orders for another Mosque to be constructed close to the town of Kuala Kangsar. This too, was not completed until after the Sultan's death. Prior to this Sultan Idris had caused many 'Surau' and 'Madrasah' to be erected all over the State, and had secured a source of income for them by creating religious trusts.

Sultan Idris played a prominent part in the creation of the Federated Malay States in 1895, and by giving his written

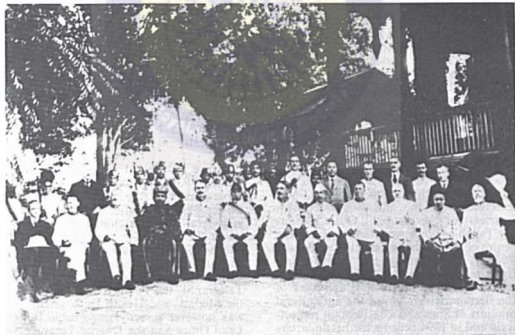
*A Royal Wedding (Bersanding)
in Kuala Kangsar.*

Photo: Straits Times.

agreement to the scheme at an early stage, he influenced the Rulers of Selangor and Pahang and the Yang di-Pertuan Besar and Ruling Chiefs of Negri Sembilan. His Royal Highness was the host at the first 'Durbar' of Malay Rulers which was held in Kuala Kangsar on the 14th and 15th July 1897 and took a leading part in the discussions.

Sultan Idris received the following British decorations: C.M.G. (1884) and K.C.M.G. (1898) from Queen Victoria. G.C.M.G. (1901) from King Edward VII, and G.C.V.O. (1913) from King George V.

After his return from England in 1911, His Royal Highness's health began to deteriorate. He visited Port Dickson on a number of occasions, staying there for several weeks at a time, but any improvement was of short duration. In December 1915 his condition became increasingly serious and in spite of every available medical attention His Royal Highness died on 14th January 1916. He was 67 years old. He was buried on Bukit Chandan near Ubudiah Mosque, and was succeeded by his eldest son, who took the title of Sultan Abdul Jalil Karamatullah Shah.



*Meeting of the Federal Council at Kuala Kangsar, 8.7. 1913.
 Sultan Idris in the Centre*

(Photo lent by Raja Halijah binti Raja Razman)