

# Personalities in Contemporary Perak-Johor Royal Malay Poetry

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## Abstract

In the 16th century to the end of the 19th century, *syair* (a type of Malay poetry) was one of the literary ideas of the palace writers. The pattern of authorship that praised and narrated the sultan in his time. After the Western colonization that brought together authorship patterns of various forms and genres, the king was no longer an idea in writing. *Syair* was no longer an option as a medium of creation. Such a pattern of authorship began to weaken with the development of modern literature. The Poem of the History of Her Highness Tengku Ampuan Besar Pahang (*Syair Riwayat Yang Amat Mulia Tengku Ampuan Besar Pahang*, 1953) was the last recording of the history of the Royal Family. However, in this contemporary era, two such works appeared, The Poem of The Humble Sultan Azlan Shah (*Syair Sultan Azlan Shah Berjiwa Rakyat*, 2009) by Mohd Ibrahim bin Said and The Poem of His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar (*Syair DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar* (2018) by Maskiah binti Masrom. Both Royal poetry texts were used as the study samples. The result found both writers make the king the writing subject. The comparative study was applied to examine their authorship in presenting contemporary Royal history. Intrinsic research methods on the study sample were also used. The study found a similarity in authorship by displaying their state king's personality. The results proved royal poetry remains relevant in elevating and glorifying a king even in the modern era. The position of modern authors outside the court does not prevent them from producing royal poems.

**Keywords.** Literary criticism, personality, relevance, Royal poetry, contemporary

## 1. Introduction

Historical *syair* (a form of Malay poetry that is made up of four-line stanzas or quatrains) can be classified into three categories. First, historical poetry describes short events. Second, the poetry focuses on the palace. Third, it is themed on a person's personal story or character. The second category focuses on the narration of praise for the greatness of the palace construction, the king, dignitaries, and even the city-state. Usually, the writer of such work consists of the king, dignitaries, and officials. A.Rahman Kaeh (1981:101) explained that most of the palace literature was written by poets who were called by the king to record everything that happened around the palace. In this contemporary era, in a situation in which the writer has no relationship with the palace, neither a relative of the Royal family nor access to the palace, two artists were able to document the story of the greatness of the palace's construction and praise for the king. Whereas both writers are from the majority and are only educators. *Syair Sultan Azlan Shah Putera Berjiwa Rakyat* by a writer from Perak. *Syair DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar*, by a writer from Johor. Both historical *syair* are categorized as poetry that focuses on the palace by glorifying the king as classified by Hookyas (Mohd Yusuf Hashim: 1991 49-52).

## 2. Literature Review

Several studies are done on royal poetry texts. The text of *Syair Tawarikh Zainal Abidin Yang Ketiga* was studied by Muhammad Yusuf Hashim in 1991. Muhammad Yusuf Hashim used three poetry texts related to the King of Terengganu, Sultan Zainal Abidin. Those were *Riwayat Terengganu Darul Iman*, *Syair Tawarikh Zainal Abidin Yang Ketiga*, and Text X. His study nature is of organizing and analyzing three traditional poetry Malay texts which have a historical pattern related to the state of Terengganu. Next, Noriah Mohamed analyzed the text of *Syair Almarhum Baginda Sultan Abu Bakar di Negeri Johor* by Na Tian Piet in 2001. The external study of the text covers the author and authorship as well as dating. The internal study involves the content, the background of His Majesty Sultan Abu Bakar, the education system in Johor, the appearance of Islamic elements, and the scenario of Johor's prosperity. She also compared *Syair Almarhum Baginda Sultan Abu Bakar di Negeri Johor* by Na Tian Piet with *Syair Sultan Abu Bakar*, the works of a traveler in Pahang. *Syair Tawarikh Zainal Abidin Yang Ketiga Sebuah karya Agung Terengganu* studied by Jelani Harun, was published in *Jurnal Iman* in 2015. The results discuss the strength and position of *Syair Tawarikh Zainal Abidin Yang Ketiga* to enable this work to be considered a Masterpiece. Jelani Harun, 2015

worked on the text of *Hikayat Misa Melayu*. His research was carried out via transliteration of the text. The six stories were used as a basis for his translation. Jelani Harun also explained the differences between the six stories. His study also focused on the text synopsis.

Zainal Abidin 111 *Biografi Sultan yang Adil dan Alim* studied by Jelani Harun which was published in 2017. His study also analyzes the text of *Syair Tawarikh Zainal Abidin Yang Ketiga* for basic biographical writing of Sultan Zainal Abidin III in the context of being a just and pious sultan. Ultimately, he concluded that Sultan Zainal Abidin III was a just and pious ruler in his time. These previous studies focused on royal poetry texts from the 1800 to 1900 era.

This means that the study of new texts created in the contemporary era has never been done by any scholar. So this gap is to be filled by highlighting a discussion of new texts. A comparison regarding the idea of authorship between two royal poetry texts of the contemporary era becomes a research analysis.

### 3. Methodology

Qualitative research was used. The qualitative method was chosen because the analysis used repeated research on the textual content of these works. Close reading was done on the two texts. The qualitative study was done to understand the delivery of ideas or story content. A close reading of the text of *Syair Sultan Azlan Shah, Putera Berjiwa Rakyat*, and *Syair DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar* was done to obtain information regarding the scope or criteria that become the authorship idea. The method of content analysis was applied to obtain information regarding the writing idea. The idea of writing is to obtain information regarding the authorship of both writers in describing and praising the kings for their respective states. Information or data obtained and collected were analyzed using the comparative study.

### 4. Results and Discussion

*Syair Sultan Azlan Shah, Putera Berjiwa Rakyat*, and *Syair DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar* are two works of Royal poetry created in the contemporary era. Praise and respect for their respective kings become the idea of storytelling. Based on this research, both authors dignified their respective kings by displaying the king's personalities.

#### Personalities

Personalities. The nature or characteristics that a person has. Personality can be described through a person's actions and behavior. Noble behavior and actions reflected the greatness of personality. The personality of Sultan Azlan Shah and Sultan Ibrahim, of their nobility and greatness, became the writers' idea of authorship. The sultans' honorable personalities were described by the writer in their

work, which is humble and pious. The noble personality, highlighted by the author, Ibrahim bin Mohd Said in his poetry, *Syair Sultan Azlan Shah, Putera Berjiwa Rakyat*. The noble personality of Sultan Ibrahim was described by the author of Johor Royal poetry in the text, *Syair DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar*. The noble personality highlighted by these authors would be supported by the views of some figures especially in the effort of the writer to raise, praise, and dignify the king in their poetry.

Sultan Azlan's noble personality is the main idea of the narration in this poetry. Thus the author titled his poem *Syair Sultan Azlan Shah, Putera Berjiwa Rakyat*. The writer intends to tell the audience that a person of this rank and position has great humility. Arrogance, haughtiness, pomposity, and snobbishness are neither his qualities nor his practices even though he is a person with the title of sultan. The writer of this poem intends to elevate and glorify the king not only from the aspects of education and success but also from the king's morals and character. The king's noble personality is reflected in his behavior and conduct. The author has highlighted this idea in the opening stanzas of the poem. Similarly, the noble personality of Sultan Ibrahim was illustrated by the author Maskiah Masrom. The sultan's noble personality is quoted in one section, which is the first section is titled, *Menjunjung titah* (Upholding the Order). In this section, it is clear that the Johor writer has a similar desire as the poet of royal Perak, who wants to elevate and exalt the king. Specifically, in the context of authorship, it is proven both writers have clear similarities in the writing of their works. The similarity is they wish to uphold and exalt the ruler of their respective states by describing the noble personality of the king or sultan.

#### Humility

*Syair Sultan Azlan Shah, Putera Berjiwa Rakyat* written by Ibrahim bin Mohd Said describes in the initial stanza the background of the king, Sultan Azlan Shah, by introducing Kampung Manggis in Batu Gajah. A village where Sultan's mother, Hatijah Ahmad, lived. This initial depiction of a village seems to symbolize that one should not forget their origin. The position and rank acquired later in life are not a ticket for a person to change his character. This is the principle of Sultan Azlan's mother. Even though his mother is the daughter of a well-to-do and rich man in that area, a clerk known as Clerk Ahmad. She married Sultan Yusuf, who at that time was still in the hierarchy or position of *Raja Bendahara*. This is because His Majesty Sultan Yusuf still had no offspring to continue the legacy. It is hoped that by marrying Hatijah Ahmad, God will bestow offspring and descendants who would become state leaders one day. His Majesty's wishes came true, so with God's Permission, a son was born on April 19, 1928, with the chosen name of Azlan.

Long reserved the name,

His mother's choice, the name Azlan,  
Born on April 19, 1928,  
Long-life prayed the people.  
(*Syair Sultan Azlan Shah, Putera Berjiwa Rakyat S86*)

Therefore, Sultan Azlan Shah is described by the writer in his poem as a humble person. His Majesty lived and mingled with common people without caring about his status and position as of royal blood. According to Mohd Safar Hashim in text 5 *Tahun Penuh Kenangan Sultan Azlan Shah (A Year Full of Memories of Sultan Azlan Shah)* "...every year, before Eid Al-Fitri, His Majesty would not forget the unfortunate group. Accordingly, his Majesty often held receptions to welcome guests" (1994: 27). His Majesty is also depicted clearly by the writer as a citizen in a free country inhabited by various races and religions without any racism, The Sultan of Perak mingled with people of multiple races and religions without prejudice. Wan Hashim Wan Teh in the *Illustrated Biography of His Majesty Sultan Azlan Shah* acknowledges this because His Majesty attended an English school in Batu Gajah Perak, which "...has given His Majesty a wide opportunity to socialize not only with Malay students but also with Chinese, Indian, and Punjab (1989: 68). In fact, he did not see his position as a prince as an obstacle to enjoying life with a different rank and position. For him, life as a prince does not hinder him to live together.

King Azlan gets along with everyone,  
No matter the color and appearance,  
Common people are proud,  
To have a humble prince.  
Such is Tunku Azlan's attitude,  
A king of humility,  
Since childhood playing together,  
All races are friends.  
Since childhood socializing widely,  
All races become his friends,  
No exception for colors and limitations,  
No restriction in the relation.  
(*Syair Sultan Azlan Shah, Putera Berjiwa Rakyat S 89, 217 & 847*)

The poet's statement is in line with Wan Hashim Wan Teh in the *Biography of His Royal Highness Sultan Azlan Shah*, although Wan Hashim Wan Teh's text was published 17 years earlier than the poem. However, there exist similar views of this figure and the poet. According to Wan Hashim Wan Teh "...even though he has royal blood, his majesty has ample opportunity to be matured outside the gilded cage (1989: IV). Wan Hashim Wan Teh also portrayed this in *The Illustrated Biography of His Majesty Sultan Azlan Shah*, "...Although of royal blood, His Majesty was not raised in the palace but among ordinary people. This gave him ample opportunity to be mature and go through the twists and turns of life freed from the gilded cage" (1989:65).

Because of his good and humble nature as he neither looked at rank nor bloodline, the people celebrated him. Because of the people's acceptance, he was

recognized as a king of humility. Sultan Azlan Shah's humbleness is loved by all the state's people. Based on the text of *Galeri Sultan Azlan*, (1993: 8), as a child, he was known as a loving, carefree, and fun child. His Majesty made friends with various races and was loved by his playmates. This confirms the hadith of the Prophet S.A.W. narrated by Ibnu Abi Shaibah, which means, "A just and humble king is God's umbrella and spear in the world. God will raise them as 70 righteous people.

The purity of character is the result of his mother, Hatijah Ahmad's education, who is aware that she is not of royal blood but that fate has matched her with Sultan Yusuf, becoming a person with a title. The birth of Sultan Azlan was something that his father, Sultan Yusuf, was looking forward to, he wanted a prince to continue his legacy. With such education and upbringing, Sultan Azlan applies it in his daily life. Life in such a village has successfully made Sultan Azlan forget the status and position of the royal blood flowing in his body. Wan Hashim Wan Teh stated in the *Biography of DYYM Sultan Azlan Shah*, "...because of such an atmosphere in the early stages of his life, he had the opportunity to live and socialize with ordinary people and understand all the problems they faced (1989: 11). Playing, running, and wading the valleys in the village became a game in life that may not be forgotten. His Majesty was also taught to always live in mutual respect, not be arrogant, and use position, rank, and status as an obstacle to building relationships with the community. This knowledge is the self-awareness of Sultan Azlan's mother, she is only a commoner, not of noble blood, only a position accepted based on a marriage with the royal class. These words of advice were also imparted to her son, Sultan Azlan and those words are what the 34th Sultan of Perak holds. These words are not just a philosophy, but a practice in life, even when His Majesty holds the title of the 34th Sultan for the state of Perak. Mohd Safah Hashim also asserted that "even though he was of Royal blood, His Majesty's life as a whole was as an ordinary citizen. The friendly, jovial, and considerate nature, makes Sultan Azlan Shah very popular with friends and comrades" (1994: 3).

Early childhood in mother's care,  
Taught to be friendly with others,  
Don't just look at the sky,  
Grass on earth, do not forget.  
The king's mother took the moment,  
To leave a meaningful message,  
If Azlan goes anywhere,  
Take good care of yourself.  
Guard your dignity, your name,  
When speaking, be polite,  
Don't be arrogant with the rank,  
Be polite, it is in Malay culture.

(*Syair Sultan Azlan Shah, Putera Berjiwa Rakyat S 91, 255, 256*)

The noble personality and humble nature of Sultan Ibrahim are described by a Johor poet entitled, *Syair DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan*

*Iskandar*. Sultan Ibrahim is described by the writer as a king or sultan who is not arrogant. His Majesty is always approaching the people and being with them. He did not want his position as a king or sultan to be an obstacle for him to meeting the common people. In fact, His Majesty has toured the entire state of Johor for seventeen years, from 2001 to 2017. Each of his travels will be filled with certain themes. The theme is very close to the people in the area he explored. His Majesty made meeting with people an annual activity and his obligation. That's why the writer focused on writing about his humble personality or character in the context that he was never arrogant, haughty, or pompous. Even though he is in the highest position in the state. The writer discussed this in a special section entitled *Syair Kembara Mahkota Johor* (Johor Crown Adventure Poems) in the fourth section.

Arrogance and pompousness are not symbols that the writer quotes about her beloved king. This royal Johor poet revealed that the king was very humble and loves his people. The attitude of respect and visiting each other to meet the people became His Majesty's attitude and way of life. In fact, in the practice of such a way of life, His Majesty did it together with his people to dignify and uphold the command of Allah s.w.t. His Majesty upholds religious events related to sharia and God's teachings by living together with his people. The month of Ramadhan, a special month in Islam, is used as a platform by His Majesty to get closer to the people. For example, the program of breaking the fast and *tarawih* prayer (special optional prayer on the night of Ramadhan) has become an event for His Majesty to be together with his people. For him, he is equal in the eyes of God; only in the world, he is given the position of a king who is obligated to lead perfectly.

Come Ramadhan, the blessed month  
Stopped by mosques far and near,  
The people came, a crowd,  
Breaking fast with the people.  
He performed the tarawih prayer,  
In the city in the countryside no discrimination,  
Sincere relationship indefatigable dedication,  
That is the sign of a righteous leader.

(*Syair DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar S43 & 44*)

His Majesty's attitude towards the people is not only during the month of Ramadan, but on Friday, His Majesty also took the opportunity to perform Friday Prayers in any mosque throughout Johor. Hereby, His Majesty would approach and get to know his people. In addition, the writer seemingly intended to prove that the sultan is seen as one of the leaders who make the Islamic teachings the point of commonality between him and the people. For him, arrogance will lead him to failure in leadership management.

When he was appointed as a regent,  
Meet many common people,  
Friday prayer anywhere,

For five years he did.

Sultan Ibrahim, a distinguished leader,  
Caring and loving,  
Developed Johor excellently,  
Religious obedience is exalted.

(*Syair DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar S42 & S61*)

His Majesty's steps to be with the common people were done since he was first appointed as regent. Even only as the regent, his majesty has begun to approach the people. His majesty's attitude without any pompousness and arrogance has made him a humble person. Arrogance is not part of his majesty's behavior. The close and friendly relationship with the people continues to be built.

From Johor Bahru to Batu Pahat,  
To Muar then Segamat,  
Mersing and Kluang before the end,  
Meet and greet all people.  
Pontian, Kulai and Kota Tinggi,  
Also visited no exceptions,  
Common people be treated with respect,  
They are very pleased.

(*Syair DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar S46 & 47*)

According to Abdul Rahim Ramli, The Chairman of the Johor Royal Council stated that Sultan Ibrahim loves his people strongly. This can be proven in his quote in his book *Sejarah Adat Istiadat DiRaja Johor*. His Majesty's love for the people was further proven when the Tea Ceremony, which in the past was usually held at the Grand Palace grounds, attended by state dignitaries, was changed and held according to the concept of "open house" for all the people at the Johor Bahru City Square. Sultan Ibrahim, Raja Zarith, and the relatives watched the cultural performance and then went to meet the people in a friendly atmosphere. Performances of *keroncong*, jazz, and *zapin* which are usually held in private, are now made into a festival for the people in the open. The state banquet which is usually held in the Grand Palace Dining Hall with limited invitations is now open to community representatives, associations, voluntary organizations of all races, indigenous representatives, and others. This banquet was held in a spacious and comfortable place at the Persada International Convention Center, in Johor Bahru. (2011:257)

Abdul Rahim Ramli reinforces the statement regarding the noble attitude of his Majesty who is humble during the Coronation (2017: xvii). According to him, His Majesty will travel to all corners of the state, meeting and communicating with His people while learning about their welfare and offering assistance to improve their lives.

As citizens of Malaysia, we live in a multiracial community. Malaysia is formed as a multi-ethnic country, so we must respect, help, and trust each other. To live in peace and tranquility in a country of various races, an attitude of tolerance must be possessed by

the people and the leaders. If the leader, not to mention the king, has a humble nature, especially in the context of mutual respect and helping each other even of different races or nations, surely the country's harmony can be preserved. This is the humility of DYMM Sultan Ibrahim, the sultan of Johor.

When serving as regent,  
He attended many events,  
Regardless of race and religion,  
Officiating the school, he did.  
Old and young, *lebai* and *haji*,  
Men, women, toddlers, and babies,  
Malay, Chinese, Indian, and Native,  
All dear to him.

(Syair DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar S45 & 47)

Sultan Ibrahim amended the dress rules of honorary dignitaries who attend royal ceremonies to respect the customs and culture of other races for the comfort of his guests, especially non-Muslims. This is confirmed by Abdul Rahim Ramli in the *History of Johor Royal Customs*, '...on 1 February 2010, His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim amended the regulations' (2011: 263). Abdul Rahim Ramli also stated that for the multiple races to live harmoniously, His Majesty allows the Chinese and Indian communities to practice their respective cultures, religions, and beliefs without restrictions. Another example of religious tolerance was His Majesty had given land to the Chinese community, the Catholic Christian Community, and the Protestants to build a church (2017: 183).

To form a harmonious life in the diversity of races, religions, and beliefs, His Majesty needs to look after, preserve, and treat his people well. His Majesty makes an obligation to attend all programs, events, and activities. In fact, for him, it is a duty to provide 1001 needs for the benefit of the people under his protection. For his majesty, the people have the right to get all the necessities for the continuation of life. His Majesty takes care of not only the physical needs but also the mental needs for the comfort and perfect life of the people. Therefore, all the needs in seeking and gaining knowledge should be done by humans, so His Majesty made a task like this a trust that should be carried out. Therefore, building and providing infrastructure related to knowledge is an effort His Majesty needs to do. This is his noble attitude. His Majesty has a clear vision for his people so that their well-being and needs are preserved. His Majesty's noble attitude is highly praised. This is one of the examples of a ruler who is in God's care. Taj Us-Salatin showed the king who takes care of and rules his people perfectly like King Nashruwan. Even though King Nashruwan was not a Muslim ruler, God still preserved his body. Surely, this is the attitude of the Sultan of Johor towards his people.

When serving as regent,  
He attended many events,  
Regardless of race and religion,  
Officiating the school, he did.

(Syair DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar S45)

Certainly, the two sultans of Perak, Sultan Azlan Shah, and the Sultan of Johor, Sultan Ibrahim who are depicted by the author in the poem have similarities in terms of the noble qualities they showed. The idea of authorship for both contemporary Royal poets showed something in common, which is to talk about the greatness and nobility of their state king. So the noble personality possessed such as humility in the context of helping each other, tolerance, trust, and responsibility towards the people become the idea of authoring historical stories in these works. The figures' views strengthen the statements of these artists in their poems.

### Obedience and Piousness

Parents are the origin that leads to our birth into this world. For this reason, Islamic teachings have outlined and placed parents in a high place in the family relationship, even more powerfully, it has been paired with the command to monotheism Allah S.W.T. This situation is shown by the word of God in surah Al-Isra, verse 23 which means:

Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honor.

Narrated by Imam Bukhari and Muslims that the deeds that Allah s.w.t likes the most are prayer on time, devotion to the elderly, and jihad in the way of Allah. This expression based on the Qur'an and hadith showed that Muslims who claim to believe in One God are obligated to obey both parents, as is one of God's teachings. As a servant who believes in the One God, Islam teaches people not to be disobedient children by neglecting their parents. Without both parents, we will not be born into the world and know the meaning of life without His Permission. Adhering to these teachings, Ibrahim bin Mohd Said showed the reader that Sultan Azlan Shah, the Sultan of Perak, firmly adheres to the teachings of Islam which emphasize the obedience to both parents, especially to a mother who lends her womb for nine months. For the Sultan of Perak, the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad S.A.W. have become the guiding principle of his life, as recorded by the writer in the poem.

Strong roots of a thousand trees,  
Heaven lies under mother's feet,  
Such is what he holds,  
King Azlan holds that philosophy.  
A small house with brick pillars,  
Big building, the pillar is walled,  
Since a child, adored his mother,  
Growing up, the love multiplied.

(Syair Sultan Azlan Shah, Putera Berjiwa Rakyat S 99 & 101)

Professor Kho Kay Kim and Abdullah Abdul Kadir in *Sultan Azlan Shah The Ninth King of Malaysia* stated that before going to Kuala Lumpur to be appointed as His Royal Highness the Yang Dipertuan Agong, he

met his mother first, "...before his Royal Highness's departure by an Executive Jet for Kuala Lumpur, Sultan Azlan Shah bade a fond farewell to his mother Toh Puan Besar Hatdijah binti Ahmad" (1996: 36), supported by a 2003 publication entitled *Tokoh-tokoh Batu Gajah, Perak* by the National Archives of Malaysia, confirming that Sultan Azlan Shah was obedient to his mother. The principle that heaven lies under the mother's feet has indeed become his grasp. The text supported the statement. Her mother was born in Batu Gajah. He loved his mother very much. His Majesty held fast to the words of the Hadith that "heaven is under the mother's feet". His Majesty always visits his mother's grave in Batu Gajah. This bond of love is what gave him great encouragement to go through life.

(2003: 15)

The poem described His Majesty as very obedient to his parents, especially his mother. The author describes this obedience because His Majesty realizes that a woman who has the title of mother is a person who has conceived, cared for, nurtured, and educated her to adulthood with love and affection. With love, His Majesty was cared for. Wan Hashim Wan Teh in his book *The Biography of DYMM Sultan Azlan Shah* stated that one of the people he loved was his mother, "...among the people in this world who are close to his majesty, one person who is very dear and is always in his memory no matter where he is, is his beloved mother (1989: 35). Because of that, he obeyed and respect his mother.

From childhood to adulthood,  
 Mother cares, is full of love,  
 Love and care, as a role model,  
 Praised his mother all the time.  
 Raja Azlan a teenage prince,  
 Praised by his mother and father,  
 His mother, the place he confides,  
 His mother, the hope, and the dreams.

(Syair Sultan Azlan Shah, Putera Berjiwa Rakyat S 97 & 98)

Because of his obedience to his mother, he placed his undivided trust in her. For him, his mother is everything. It was his mother who lent her shoulder for him to express his restlessness, worry, sadness, and disappointment. All his sorrows and joys are shared with his mother. All his secrets are revealed to his mother because for him, "...he finds strength and refuge in his mother when he is troubled" (1989:35). He is sure and aware that his mother is a person who understands his happiness and suffering. It can be said that Sultan Azlan Shah go to his mother when he spoke, complained, and shared stories.

Raja Azlan a teenage prince,  
 Praised by his mother and father,  
 His mother, the place he confides,  
 His mother, the hope, and the dreams.  
 The mother's firm advice,  
 Guidance for the whole life,  
 In education, his mother encourages,  
 For him, his mother is the glory.

The obedience of a prince,  
 To assume the position of Yang di-Pertuan Agong,  
 Immediately returned to his mother,  
 Telling her the good news.  
 It has already been said,  
 His mother, the dream encourager,  
 Loyalty and obedience, the target,  
 Heaven's afterlife under the mother's feet  
 Loving his mother limitlessly,  
 Eating and drinking are not forgotten,  
 Everywhere he does dine,  
 Remembering her, the food he delivered.  
 (Syair Sultan Azlan Shah, Putera Berjiwa Rakyat S 98, S100, S762, 763 &764)

The symbol of His Majesty's obedience to his mother is showcased by the construction of a mosque in Batu Gajah called Toh Puan Besar Hatijah Mosque, named after his mother. This mosque was built in 1930, but on the order of His Majesty Sultan Azlan Shah, this mosque was renewed in 2006. Then this mosque was renamed from Batu Gajah District Mosque to Toh Puan Besar Hatijah Mosque. The house of God, named after his mother, is a symbol of devotion, appreciation, and obedience of a son to his mother. Because of this love, affection, and obedience, this mosque, which is said to be the most beautiful in Perak, was rebuilt with an architecture that resembles some of the leading mosques in the world such as Al-Aqsa Mosque, Nabawi Mosque, and several mosques in Palestine and Syria.

Sultan Ibrahim, the Sultan of Johor, was portrayed by Maskiah Masrom in her poetry, as obedient. In the depiction of the sultan of Johor, it can be said that the symbol of his majesty's obedience can be classified into two parts. The first is obedience to the One and Only God, and the second is his obedience to the duty and trusts as a national leader. His Majesty's obedience to the commands and teachings of Allah s.w.t can be found in His Majesty's efforts to approach the people. His Majesty has organized events and programs with religious elements in his efforts to approach the people. This means that His Majesty has implemented practical, useful, and also continuous steps. More accurately, it is said that he is doing 2 tasks and responsibilities in 1 job. As the saying goes, kill two birds with one stone. In His Majesty's fulfillment of God's trust and orders, the symbol of His Majesty's obedience to God is also carrying out his duties as a leader. For example, His Majesty will perform Friday prayers at any mosque or tour all the mosques in Johor. His Majesty used the opportunity to worship God to meet the common people in every corner of Johor. His obedience to Allah S.W.T. is seen in the context of his worship. This means that he did not neglect his duty as a servant to The Creator. Ultimately, His Majesty's obedience to Allah s.w.t is seen in the fulfillment of a servant's duty. This also confirms the style of authorship of Johor writers in her poems concerning her obedience as a normal citizen. Come Ramadhan, the blessed month  
 Stopped by mosques far and near,

The people came, a crowd,  
 Breaking fast with the people.  
 When he was appointed as a regent,  
 Meet many common people,  
 Friday prayer anywhere,  
 For five years he did.

(Syair DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar S42 & S43)

The Sultan of Johor's obedience to his duty and responsibility as a human being to his creator is clearly described by the author through God's command in the third pillar of Islam, which is to fast in the holy month. The month in which Allah s.w.t sent down a book that became the foundation and support for all his followers on earth. His Majesty fulfilled the obligation of fasting in the month of Ramadan, and in carrying out this duty, His Majesty joined them together with his responsibilities as a leader. He fulfilled his duty and trust as God's servant to fast in the month of Ramadan and use this space to meet and see his people. The program of breaking the fast together is intertwined with His Majesty's role of obedience to the command of Allah SWT in the third pillar of Islam. The mosques in all corners of Johor, both far and near, have been visited by His Majesty throughout the holy month of Ramadan since he became the leader of the state. For him, attending the breaking the fast ceremonies in the mosques, allows him to meet his people.

Come Ramadhan, the blessed month  
 Stopped by mosques far and near,  
 The people came, a crowd,  
 Breaking fast with the people.  
 He performed the tarawih prayer,  
 In the city, in the countryside, no discrimination,  
 Sincere relationship indefatigable dedication,  
 That is the sign of a righteous leader.

(Syair DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar S43 & S44)

As proof of the obedience of the Sultan of Johor, Sultan Ibrahim towards his Creator, the role he played as God's servant is clearly shown by the poet. In carrying out God's command to fast in Ramadan, His Majesty did not neglect the optional worship. The tarawih prayer that is done in the month of Ramadan was also a space for him to approach his people. For this optional worship, His Majesty not only explores the mosques in Johor but other places of worship such as the musollas in the village. This is for him to get to know the condition of his people both in urban and rural areas. The statement that His Majesty Sultan Ibrahim often meets his people through Friday prayers, tarawih prayers, and breaking the fast can be confirmed through Abdul Rahim Ramli, the Chairman of the Johor Royal Council's writings in *Sejarah Adat Istiadat Diraja Johor*, "Every week, His Majesty goes to perform obligatory Friday prayers in the villages across Johor. His Majesty often went to perform tarawih prayers together with the people in the districts" (2011: 254). As His Majesty undertakes his duty as a servant to the

Creator, the trust assumed as the leader of Johor is also fulfilled through these rituals. This way, His Majesty will not only be closer to God but could also approach his people so that the relationship between the leaders and the people will be closer. He performed the tarawih prayer,  
 In the city, in the countryside, no discrimination,  
 Sincere relationship indefatigable dedication,  
 That is the sign of a pious leader.

(Syair DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar S44)

The pious leader, as described by the writer towards his king in the last line in the 44th stanza. In this context, the word pious is referred to the King of Johor, Sultan Ibrahim. It is not an exaggeration for the writer to link the Sultan with the word pious, because piousness has a very broad meaning in the context of obedience to Allah S.W.T. according to the Prophet Muhammad's words, narrated by Saidina Ali:

There are three characteristics of a pious person, first, always improving the relationship with Allah S.W.T through his pious deeds, second, always improving his religion by doing righteous deeds and third, always being satisfied with people from what he is satisfied with.

In this context, believers must always take care of their relationship with God. One of the ways to maintain a relationship with God is through *dhikr*. According to Imam An-Nawawi, *dhikr* includes all intuition, recitation, and practice. Practices carried out by organizing or participating in an event based on obedience to Allah are included in the *dhikr* concept. Imam Hassan Al-Bana also agreed that every business done to get closer to God is *dhikr*. Therefore, in the context of the word pious that the writer has dedicated to the king, it refers to two symbols of obedience. First, the sultan's obedience to his Creator, which is to uphold religious affairs such as Friday prayers, breaking the fast, and tarawih prayers. The second obedience is to approach his people. In other words, he obeys his responsibility as a leader who should always be close to the people. Next, His Majesty's obedience to the duties entrusted to him. Duties and responsibilities as a leader, as the head of the state, which is the sultan of Johor. Among them is ensuring the welfare of his people. Justice must be fulfilled. This is because His Majesty is aware that neglecting the people's rights is disobedience that may lead to negative results or impacts for His Majesty in particular, and the people, in general. This is supported by Malike Ibrahim's statement in his study entitled *Parliamentary Democratic System in Malaysia*. He stated, in a government, it is necessary to:

Emphasize the rights, justice, freedom, equality, sovereignty, and the voice of the people, especially the minority groups. Ignoring and denying one's rights and interests will cause several problems and conflicts.  
 (2012: 26)

Based on Malike Ibrahim's view, a leader must take care of the welfare of his people to preserve justice in leadership. Indeed, the neglect and denial of the rights and interests of the people will cause calamity. For example, conflicts between the people and leaders may cause economic slowdown and stunted development, and the government will be in turmoil. Based on this negative impact, the sultan of Johor is said to be very careful to preserve the people's welfare. His Majesty thinks that welfare and justice are for the people. These stanzas supported the argument.

Sultan Ibrahim often asserted,  
The Johor nation needs to be developed,  
The state vision can be achieved,  
The standard of living can be improved,  
His Majesty's views are given attention,  
By the local government too,  
Johor nation's welfare is prioritized,  
Must be treated fairly.  
His Majesty is a very strict ruler,  
His ideas are always brilliant,  
People's well-being is prioritized,  
All manifestos must be fulfilled.

(Syair DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar S60, S65 & 67)

This is the intellectual authorship idea of the Johor writer to describe her king's leadership. Obedience to God has become a philosophy for the government, as depicted by the author. Interestingly, in fulfilling his duty as a servant to his Creator, the writer also describes the sultan used the sharia to treat the people under his protection. Religious ceremonies he attended were used to approach his people in urban and rural areas. His Majesty has made religious institutions a platform for his meeting. The king of Johor's wisdom is carefully described through the stanzas written by the author. Likewise, His Majesty's obedience to people's duty and trust. Justice and the welfare of the people are the cornerstones in managing governance, and ensuring that his people get the best governance is the priority in his leadership. On this basis, His Majesty ensures that the welfare of the people is protected at all costs.

His Majesty, the wise sultan,  
He desired to develop the beloved Johor,  
Need to redouble all efforts,  
For the people to prosper.  
His Majesty always advice,  
For the state and the federation,  
Speaking the truth, being courageous,  
The people's welfare is taken care of.

(Syair DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar S68 S73)

"*Muafakat itu Berkat* (Consensus is a blessing)" is a motto used by the Sultan of Johor, Sultan Ibrahim. With this motto, His Majesty rules the state and the people of Johor with justice, honesty, and equality. For His Majesty, upholding and applying this motto which centers on Islamic teachings in management,

administration, and governance, will secure the lives of the people and help His Majesty fulfill his responsibilities as the patron of the people that will surely be blessed by the Almighty. This motto proves that His Majesty has a high nobility in the context of his obedience to the duty and the trust he carries. His Majesty's only desire as a leader of Johor, wanting his management and administration to be blessed by the Almighty.

Islamic teachings are the core of administration,  
"Consensus is a Blessing" as a philosophy,  
The motto is used to be more effective,  
In administration, and also in management.  
Try searching all over the country,  
Is there, such a sultan?

With people, he is approachable,  
Never minding his royalty

(Syair DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar S59 & S93)

So with that motto, His Majesty has such a pure and noble desire to ensure that all the people of Johor will enjoy all forms of development. His Majesty also wishes that with efficient management and administration and trust based on obedience to the teachings of Islam, the lives of the people of patronage will be protected. All the wealth of Johor will be fully enjoyed. All wishes, desires, and visions of Johor to become a state that has a fair government will be achieved. His Majesty desires to also ensure that all the Johor people have a comfortable life through economic improvement. This is a symbol of His Majesty's obedience in fulfilling the trust and responsibility as a leader, and state ruler towards his people.

Sultan Ibrahim often asserted,  
The Johor nation needs to be developed,  
The state vision can be achieved,  
The standard of living can be improved,  
His Majesty, the wise sultan,  
He desired to develop the beloved Johor,  
Need to redouble all efforts,  
For the people to prosper.

(Syair DYMM Sultan Ibrahim Ibni Almarhum Sultan Iskandar S60 & S73)

Based on the above discussion regarding Sultan Ibrahim's obedience to having an honest and just government, he has sworn, vowed, and promised to rule well. For him, it is his duty to be a fair patron of his people. This was the words of His Majesty's declaration during His Majesty's appointment as *Tunku Mahkota Johor* (Crown Prince of Johor) on 3 July 1981 corresponding to 1 Ramadhan 1401 Hijrah. He vowed to:

I will never be vain, pompous and even arrogant because I have been declared as the Sultan, the king of the State of Johor, and all its Subjugated Territories, indeed, I always worship Allah because I am aware of the responsibility that rests on my shoulders as the Sultan. Moreover, I pray to Allah that we may be blessed with success and guidance as well as a lot of patience when running the state

government for the sake of Islam and the state of Johor, and the people as a whole. With Allah's guidance and help, I could carry out our duties fairly and equitably.

Additionally, in the context of obedience displayed by the kings of the writer's respected states for royal poetry, there are two differences in their authorship style. The writer of Perak showed the obedience of a king toward his mother. His obedience to his mother has been described by the writer as Sultan Azlan Shah having placed his mother in his top hierarchy. All the problems are expressed to his mother. The trust in his mother becomes a His Majesty's cornerstone. With a high sense of obedience to his mother, a monument was built out of love for his beloved mother. A mosque that was built by his mother during her lifetime for her beloved religion has been renewed and updated by his majesty. With the renovation of the mosque, Sultan Azlan Shah renamed the mosque to Toh Puan Hatijah Mosque, which was originally known as the Batu Gajah District Mosque. He did all this out of obedience and love for his dearest mother. The prophet's hadith told that heaven is under the mother's feet and is carved in his soul, mind, and actions.

In contrast, the obedience painted by the Johor writer, Miskiah Masrom towards her king. The obedience of the Sultan of Johor is quoted by the author for his relationship with Al-Khaliq. The obedience of the Sultan of Johor is guided by the obligatory sharia teachings. In building his relationship as a servant to the Creator, the Sultan of Johor did not neglect his duties as a leader to look after his patronage. The writer's wisdom is seen in the depiction of the king's obedience to the Creator combined with the Johor sultan's obedience to duties and trusts as the leader of the state. His Majesty's desire as a ruler of the people of his state, his priority is to ensure they get their rights. In short, this is the value of obedience that His Majesty highlighted and then described by the Johor writer in her royal poetry. This situation has put him very close to the people's hearts. His Majesty's humble attitude has raised his position and his supremacy in the souls of the Johor people.

## 5. Conclusion

Humility and obedience are two values possessed by both sultans. Not arrogant, the humble attitude put these two rulers in the people's hearts. They did not limit their relationship with the people. They even hold programs to get closer to the people. The people are the priority in the government and administration of both sultans. Sultan Azlan Shah's personality refers to the noble value that he possesses, which is humility and obedience. His humbleness in helping people, tolerance, trust, and responsibility towards the people under their patronage becomes the idea of the historical records in the poems. Sultan Azlan Shah's unwavering obedience to his beloved mother by holding to the principle that "heaven is under the mother's feet".

Obedience to the duties and responsibilities of a ruler is the principle of Sultan Ibrahim. His love for the people is the foundation of his government. Vision is created for the people's well-being and the state's progress under his administration. His kindness is highlighted through his love for the environment. His love for the environment brings about love for God. His Majesty's obedience to the people by helping and treating them pleasingly. Visits and events to religious ceremonies are used as a platform for him to get to know his fellow citizens. The love of the sultan of Johor, Sultan Ibrahim is not only for his family, but for the people, and the state.

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