

British Colonial Administration and Islamic Institutional Resilience in Kelantan (1915–1945)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the socio-religious administration of Kelantan under British colonial administration, Malaya, between 1915 and 1945 through the analytical framework of Ibn Khaldun's Theory of *'Umrān* (civilization). During this transitional colonial era, Kelantan was widely designated as the "Paris of Malaya," reflecting its burgeoning commercial dynamism, cultural vibrancy, and intellectual development. However, British colonial hegemony introduced structural transformations that precipitated socio-moral tensions and fractured traditional Islamic values. In response, local administrative elites led by Dato' Perdana, in tandem with the Kelantan Islamic Religious and Malay Customs Council (*Majlis Agama Islam dan Adat Istiadat Melayu Kelantan* [MAIK]), executed a series of institutional reforms designed to re-establish Islamic governance and social order. Employing a qualitative historical research design, this study utilizes thematic document analysis of state archival registries, colonial intelligence reports, MAIK administrative files, and contemporary historiographical literature. The empirical data are systematically analyzed through three core dimensions of Khaldunian theory such as religion (*al-Dīn*), social solidarity (*'Aṣabiyyah*), and political-legal architecture (*Siyāsah & al-Sharī'ah*). The findings demonstrate that MAIK functioned as a critical institutional nexus that harmonized modern bureaucratic expansion with Islamic moral governance. Through targeted pedagogical initiatives, rigorous legal enforcement, and strategic elite coalitions, Dato' Perdana's administration fortified social cohesion and mitigated systemic moral decline. This study concludes that Kelantan's socio-political resilience during the colonial epoch was fundamentally shaped by the pragmatic operationalization of Islamic institutional leadership and Khaldunian civilizational tenets.

Keywords: Paris of Malaya in Kelantan; Ibn Khaldun; 'Umrān theory; MAIK; Islamic governance

INTRODUCTION

Kelantan is widely recognised as one of the oldest political entities in the Malay Peninsula, possessing a long and continuous tradition of governance that predates the colonial era. Owing to its strategic location along the Isthmus of Kra and its proximity to major maritime trade routes, the state emerged as an important commercial centre connecting regional and international markets (Andaya & Andaya, 2017). The presence of entrepôt ports further stimulated economic development and intensified trading activities. As international trading hubs, entrepôt ports functioned as centres for the exchange, storage, and redistribution of goods, while also providing essential facilities such as warehouses, shelters, and supplies for merchants and travellers (Seow Han Lin, 2021). Consequently, Kelantan became an important node in the commercial networks linking China, India, and the Malay world, facilitating the exchange of commodities, ideas, and cultural influences (Haziyyah Hussin, 2004).

In addition to its economic significance, Kelantan developed a well-organised system of governance that facilitated cooperation between the ruler and state officials. The state's political stability was supported by a structured administrative framework rooted in the Malay monarchical tradition (Milner, 1982). Alongside its political development, Kelantan became renowned for its rich cultural heritage, particularly its traditional performing arts such as *wayang kulit* (shadow puppet theatre), gamelan music, and *dikir barat*. These cultural traditions attracted merchants, aristocrats, and foreign visitors, enhancing the state's reputation as a regional centre of culture and learning (Roff, 1974). *Wayang kulit* functioned as an important medium of entertainment and cultural transmission, while *dikir barat* reflected the communal values and social identity of the Malay community (Fara Dayana, 2014).

Despite these cultural achievements, the rapid expansion of entertainment activities and increasing exposure to external influences generated social challenges that gradually affected the moral and social fabric of local society. During the period of British intervention and advisory administration, Kelantan experienced significant socio-cultural transformations arising from interactions between indigenous traditions and colonial modernity (Liow, 2009). The expansion of urban centres, the influx of migrant populations, and the proliferation of entertainment establishments contributed to changing patterns of social behaviour. Over time, these developments became associated with the growth of prostitution and other forms of moral transgression, leading colonial observers to describe Kelantan using the controversial epithet “Paris of Malaya” (Roff, 1974). Historical accounts suggest that women from various social backgrounds became involved in the prostitution industry, which served as a source of income for widows, single mothers, brothel operators, and owners of lodging establishments (Manderson, 1980).

The growing prevalence of prostitution and related social problems emerged as a major concern among political leaders, religious scholars, and community reformers. In response, influential figures such as Dato’ Perdana and Tok Kenali initiated various administrative and socio-religious reforms aimed at addressing moral decline and strengthening Islamic values within society (Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, 2011). These initiatives were implemented through institutions such as the Kelantan Islamic Religious and Malay Customs Council (MAIK), traditional Islamic schools, and community-based organisations. Established in 1915, MAIK played a pivotal role in promoting Islamic education, regulating religious affairs, and implementing social reform programmes designed to counter the spread of immoral activities and reinforce the Islamic identity of the state (Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, 2011).

The periodization of 1915 to 1945 marks a highly distinctive, transitional crucible in Kelantan’s history, defined by a unique set of geopolitical conditions that sharply differentiate it from both pre-1915 and post-1945 eras.

19th Century (Pre-1915)	1915–1945 (The Crucible Era)	Post-1945 (Modern Era)
• Decentralized Feudalism	• Dual-Headed Colonial Bureaucracy	• Federal Integration
• Organic Shariah/Adat	• MAIK as Hybrid Institutional Nexus	• Bureaucratic Submergence
• Fragmented Authority	• High Structural Autonomy	• Loss of Sovereign Agency

The Pre-1915 Era

Prior to 1915, Kelantanese governance was characterized by a decentralized feudal structure. While Islam was deeply woven into the social fabric, the administration of religious affairs was fragmented, relying on localized, non-codified networks of regional chieftains and village *Imams*. The legal ecosystem was organic but lacked centralized institutional power, leaving it vulnerable to external political pressures.

The 1915–1945 Crucible

This intermediate era became unique because it forced local leadership to confront a highly organized, dual-headed administrative challenge: the formalization of the British Advisory system following the 1909 Bangkok Treaty and the social disruptions of rapid colonial capitalism. The year 1915 was the turning point, marked by the administrative shock of the Tok Janggut uprising and the subsequent founding of MAIK. During these three

decades, MAIK enjoyed a rare window of structural autonomy. Because the British chose to govern indirectly and lacked the bureaucratic manpower to manage local religious matters, MAIK operated as a de facto state within a state, centralizing wealth through *Zakat* and building an independent institutional network.

The Post-1945 Era

Following the end of the Second World War and the subsequent transition toward the Federation of Malaya, this unique institutional autonomy was rapidly submerged within a centralized, federalized national framework. The rise of modern political parties, secular federal constitutions, and centralized national Islamic bureaucracies shifted the locus of power away from localized state councils. MAIK's role evolved from an autonomous architect of state-level civilization into a component of a larger federalized matrix, making the 1915–1945 era a unique historical moment of localized Islamic institutional resilience. Against this backdrop, the present study examines the political and administrative strategies employed by Dato' Perdana and MAIK in addressing the social and moral challenges that contributed to Kelantan's reputation as the "Paris of Malaya" between 1915 and 1945. By analysing the interaction between political authority, Islamic institutions, and social reform initiatives, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how indigenous governance structures responded to colonial-era social transformations and attempted to preserve the moral integrity of Malay-Muslim society. Furthermore, the study offers insights into the broader role of Islamic institutions in shaping social policy and moral governance within colonial Malaya.

Background of the Study

Traditional political and administrative systems in the Malay Peninsula existed long before the arrival of Western colonial powers and were characterised by relatively stable and systematic governing structures. The political organisation of traditional Malay society was fundamentally rooted in a feudal framework that positioned the ruler, or Sultan, at the apex of political authority. The effectiveness of governance depended largely on the ability of political leaders to administer state affairs, regulate economic activities, and maintain social order. Such administrative competence contributed significantly to the prosperity and stability of Malay polities, as exemplified by the golden age of the Malay Sultanate of Malacca (Milner, 1982; Andaya & Andaya, 2017). In a broader sense, political administration extends beyond the exercise of formal authority and power; it encompasses decision-making processes, resource allocation, institutional governance, and the regulation of social and moral order within society (Easton, 1965).

Within the historical development of the East Coast region of the Malay Peninsula, Kelantan occupies a significant position as one of the oldest Malay states to have practised a structured monarchical system of government. Historical records indicate that organised royal administration had been established in Kelantan since at least the twelfth century (Nik Hassan Shuhaimi, 1987). The state's strategic location along international maritime trade routes, coupled with the expansion of entrepôt trading ports during the nineteenth century, contributed substantially to its economic prosperity (Haziyah Hussin, 2004). Consequently, Kelantan emerged as an important centre of commercial and cultural exchanges involving merchants, travellers, and migrants from various parts of Asia. The state's rich cultural heritage, including traditional performing arts and religious traditions, further enhanced its prominence among local elites, foreign traders, and visiting dignitaries (Roff, 1974). However, the intensification of cross-cultural interactions and the proliferation of entertainment activities in port towns and commercial centres also generated social challenges that gradually affected the moral and social fabric of local society. In the context fully understanding the situation in Kelantan state for Islamic Institutional frameworks, this paper will explain certain ideas in below:

- a) Kelantan (British Malaya) — MAIK which used the Hybridized Bureaucracy for internal resilience
- b) Pattani (Siam) — Direct Assimilation and Structural Dissolution
- c) Aceh (Dutch East Indies) — Military Confrontation / Legal Marginalization
- d) Mindanao (Philippines under US) — Direct Military Suppression / and Political Exclusion

Hence to fully appreciate the distinctiveness of Kelantan's experience, its institutional trajectory must be situated within the broader patterns of Islamic institutional resilience across colonial Southeast Asia. When contrasted

with contemporary Muslim polities under foreign hegemony such as Pattani under Siamese centralization, Aceh under Dutch colonial rule, or Mindanao under American administration and Kelantan's strategic adaptation offers a compelling model of institutional survival.

- a) **Pattani:** In neighboring Pattani, the Siamese state pursued a policy of direct administrative assimilation (*Thesaphiban*), which structurally dismantled traditional Islamic legal systems and provoked overt, fragmented rebellions.
- b) **Aceh:** In Aceh, the Dutch colonial state deployed aggressive military pacification paired with the systematic marginalization of the *Ulama* in favor of secularized customary leaders (*uleebalang*), splitting the social fabric and triggering prolonged conflict.
- c) **Mindanao:** In Mindanao, American policies vacillated between direct military suppression and paternalistic integration, leaving Moro Islamic institutions isolated from the core political architecture.

In sharp contrast to these regional trajectories, Kelantan's institutional response via MAIK was uniquely characterized by an internal, proactive hybridization. Instead of retreating into defensive isolationism or launching a self-destructive armed resistance, Kelantan's elites utilized the very tools of colonial bureaucratic modernization to safeguard their socio-religious autonomy. MAIK successfully co-opted the structural mechanics of Western administrative design such as formal gazetting, codified registries, and centralized fiscal management and repurposed them to enforce Islamic governance and preserve collective solidarity. This allowed Kelantan to retain its indigenous Islamic identity as a recognized state apparatus, a feat unmatched by its structurally dismantled regional counterparts. Whereas Pattani underwent severe top-down assimilation and territorial restructuring following its annexation, resulting in an enduring erosion of Malay cultural spaces (Rahman, 2023), Kelantan's institutional adaptation under MAIK presents an alternative trajectory of regional preservation. Other regional variants, such as the socio-political marginalization of Muslims in Mindanao under Spanish and American missionary-colonial policies, illustrate the distinctiveness of Malaya's indirect rule paradigm (Rahman, 2023)

The socio-political landscape of Kelantan underwent profound transformation during the colonial period in the early twentieth century. The process began with the Siam–Kelantan Agreement of 1902 and culminated in the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909, through which Siam relinquished its authority over Kelantan and facilitated the expansion of British political influence in the state (Andaya & Andaya, 2017). The appointment of British advisers, including James Scott Mason, introduced significant administrative restructuring that altered the traditional balance of political power (Roff, 1974). Under the colonial administrative framework, the authority of the Sultan was increasingly confined to matters relating to Malay customs and Islamic affairs, while executive and bureaucratic powers were gradually transferred to British-controlled institutions (Liow, 2009).

One of the most consequential aspects of colonial intervention was the reorganisation of the legal and judicial system. The introduction of secular legal institutions substantially reduced the jurisdiction of Islamic courts, limiting their authority primarily to personal and religious matters (Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, 2011). As a result, the capacity of Islamic legal institutions to regulate moral offences and enforce social discipline was significantly weakened. This transformation in the legal structure coincided with broader socio-economic changes associated with colonial capitalism, including the influx of male migrant labourers, urban expansion, and the construction of inexpensive lodging facilities designed to support commercial activities (Gullick, 1987). Collectively, these developments created conditions that facilitated the growth of various social problems, particularly prostitution and illicit sexual activities.

The weakening of traditional mechanisms of social control had profound consequences for the moral landscape of the state. Historical evidence suggests that prostitution and other forms of sexual misconduct became increasingly prevalent in urban centres and commercial districts during the colonial period (Manderson, 1980). Economic hardship following the First World War, the burden of colonial taxation policies, fragile socio-religious conditions, and high rates of marital dissolution among widows and single mothers contributed to the vulnerability of many women (Khoo, 1984). Faced with limited economic opportunities, some resorted to

prostitution as a means of sustaining themselves and their families. The concentration of such activities in towns and emerging economic centres further amplified public concern regarding moral decline and social disorder.

These developments ultimately contributed to the emergence of a negative reputation that became closely associated with Kelantan during the colonial period. Colonial officials and observers increasingly referred to the state as the “Paris of Malaya,” a label that reflected perceptions of widespread prostitution and an active entertainment culture (Roff, 1974). More than a simple description of urban social life, the term functioned as a colonial discourse that portrayed Kelantan as a centre of moral decadence. For the Malay-Muslim community, this designation represented a profound challenge to the state's Islamic identity, social values, and collective dignity. Consequently, the phenomenon became a major concern among local political leaders, religious scholars, and reformist institutions, who sought to restore moral order and preserve the socio-religious foundations of Kelantanese society.

Against this backdrop, the present study examines the political and administrative responses undertaken by local leaders, particularly through the efforts of Dato’ Perdana and MAIK itself, in addressing the social and moral challenges that contributed to Kelantan’s reputation as the “Paris of Malaya.” Established in 1915, MAIK became a significant institution for promoting Islamic governance, religious education, and social reform within the state (Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor, 2011). By analysing the interaction between political authority, Islamic institutions, and social reform initiatives between 1915 and 1945, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how indigenous governance structures responded to colonial-era social transformations and attempted to safeguard the moral integrity of Malay-Muslim society. Furthermore, the study contributes to the broader historiography of colonial Malaya by highlighting the role of Islamic institutions and local political actors in confronting the social consequences of colonial modernity

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholarly analyses of Malay political history generally agree that the Malay Peninsula had already developed a structured and stable political system prior to the arrival of Western colonial powers. This pre-colonial governance system was fundamentally based on a feudal political order embedded within traditional Malay society, encompassing political, economic, and social dimensions. The success of the Malay Sultanate of Malacca demonstrates the importance of strong and effective leadership in sustaining administrative stability and civilisational development. The institution of monarchy played a central role in shaping governance structures and consolidating political authority in the Malay world (Abdul Monir, 2017). Similarly, Kelantan is believed to have practised a monarchical system as early as 900 AD and emerged as a prominent kingdom by the twelfth century (Ahmad Rashdan, Baharin Ilias, & Abdul Latiff Abu Bakar, 2017).

Historically, Kelantan’s political system was firmly grounded in the feudal structure, with the Sultan occupying the highest position in the administrative hierarchy. This traditional governance model has been in place since the reign of Sultan Muhammad I, where the ruler held absolute authority over political, administrative, and social matters (Haryati Hassan, 1998). Within this hierarchical system, the Sultan was regarded as the supreme authority, and his commands were expected to be obeyed by all levels of society, including nobles, officials, and commoners. The legitimacy of royal authority was further reinforced by the Malay socio-political concept of *daulat* and *derhaka*. In this belief system, disobedience to the ruler was associated with *tulah*, or divine retribution, which could bring misfortune upon the offender (Mohd Ali Kamarudin, 2004). This ideological framework strengthened the perception of the ruler as possessing extraordinary authority and divine legitimacy. Consequently, feudal governance became deeply embedded in Malay identity and political culture across generations (Muhammad Aidil Adha Zulkarnain, 2023). The administrative structure of Kelantan also demonstrates significant parallels with the political system of the Malacca Sultanate, which is widely regarded as the classical model of Malay governance (Iskandar Hassan Tan Abdullah & Nur Azuki Yusuff, 2024). A significant figure in the consolidation of Kelantan’s monarchical system was Long Yunus or Long Yunus bin Long Sulaiman bin Long Baha, who is recognised as the founder of the modern ruling dynasty of Kelantan. He successfully unified fragmented territories through strategic military and political efforts, including the conquest of Kota Kubang Labu and Legeh. His leadership played a crucial role in stabilising Kelantan and freeing it from external domination, particularly from the influence of Patani and Legeh kingdoms (A. Aziz Deraman, 2018).

The political landscape of Kelantan later experienced external intervention, beginning with Siamese influence in the late nineteenth century. Siamese involvement in Kelantan's administration can be traced to approximately 1894 (Davies, 1902). Although under Siamese suzerainty, Kelantan retained a considerable degree of internal autonomy. Unlike Western colonialism, Siamese imperial control was relatively indirect, with Kelantan required to send tribute in the form of *Bunga Emas* every three years as a symbolic gesture of diplomacy and protection (Nik Haslinda, 2011). However, the political situation shifted significantly following the Siam and Kelantan agreements of 1902, which marked the beginning of formal external interference in Kelantan's internal administration. In 1903, Siam appointed representatives, including Graham and H. W. Thomson, to oversee administrative matters in Kelantan (Mohamad Roslaily Rosdi et al., 2022). Although these officials were nominally Siamese representatives, their administrative orientation reflected pro-British interests aimed at expanding colonial influence and economic exploitation in the region.

This geopolitical competition culminated in the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909, commonly known as the Bangkok Treaty, which formally transferred Kelantan and other northern Malay states under British influence. The treaty was primarily designed to define spheres of colonial control and prevent rival European powers such as France and Russia from expanding into the Malay Peninsula (Andaya & Andaya, 2017). However, the agreement was strongly opposed by Malay elites, as it was concluded without the consent of local rulers. For instance, Long Senik known as Sultan Muhammad IV vehemently rejected the treaty, viewing it as a violation of Kelantan's sovereignty and royal authority (Mohamad Roslaily Rosdi et al., 2022). The signing of the treaty marked the beginning of formal British colonial administration in Kelantan.

Following British intervention, James Scott Mason was appointed as the first British Adviser in Kelantan, signalling the establishment of indirect colonial rule (Nik Haslinda, 2011). Under this system, the Sultan's authority was significantly reduced and largely confined to matters of Malay customs and Islamic religion. The British administration subsequently restructured the governance system, replacing many traditional Malay officials with colonial bureaucrats. Infrastructure development, including roads, post offices, and land administration offices, was introduced primarily to facilitate resource extraction and economic control. However, colonial taxation policies placed considerable financial pressure on the local population, contributing to social unrest, including the Pasir Puteh uprising of 1915 led by Tok Janggut (Abdul Monir, 2017).

Within this historical context, Dato' Perdana (Haji Wan Mahmud bin Haji Ismail) emerged as one of the most influential political figures in Kelantan's administrative history. Serving as Menteri Besar from 1921 to 1944, he played a central role in shaping the state's governance system during the colonial period (Majalah Pengasuh, 1919). He succeeded Dato' Che Hassan, who resigned due to health reasons after serving from 1900 to 1920. Dato' Perdana was widely recognised for his administrative vision, leadership capacity, and governance reforms. His contributions spanned political, economic, and social development within the state. Among his key administrative initiatives were his role as a founding figure of the Majlis Agama Islam Kelantan (MAIK), the introduction of the Penggawa position in administrative reform scheme (1917), the implementation of civil service leave regulations (1924), the introduction of a revised salary scheme for government officials (1928), and his representation of Sultan Muhammad IV in peace negotiations following the Tok Janggut uprising in Pasir Puteh in early 1915 (Ismail Che Daud, 2018). These reforms illustrate his significant contribution to strengthening administrative efficiency and consolidating state governance during a period of colonial transition.

The discourse on civilizational development within Islamic thought is anchored heavily in the historiographical and sociological frameworks established by Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406). In his seminal text, the *Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun introduced the concept of *Umran* (civilization or societal development) as an analytical tool to diagnose the rise, stability, and eventual decay of human societies (Ibn Khaldun, 2005). Traditional interpretations of Khaldunian theory decompose *Umran al-Alam* or world civilization into three dialectically linked components such as man (*insan*), life (*al-hayat*), and the cosmic environment (*al-kawn*). According to this framework, a prosperous state emerges only when these three components interact harmoniously through structured, ethical cooperation. In a practical sense, *Umran* represents a holistic social ecosystem driven by both urban and rural populations who cooperate through a shared sense of social solidarity, known as *Asabiyyah*. Ibn Khaldun posited that the longevity of any civilization does not rely solely on material or infrastructural growth;

rather, it depends on institutional justice, collective morality, and the preservation of spiritual identity. This theoretical framework provides a powerful lens for analyzing the historical and political landscape of Kelantan, Malaysia, between 1915 and 1945. During this period, the state experienced a profound tension between colonial-driven modernization and the preservation of its traditional Islamic identity. The structural components of *Umrān* such as religion, moral philosophy, social solidarity, and legal frameworks and were visibly manifested in the state's governance, particularly through the strategic administrative reforms led by the Chief Minister, Dato' Perdana.

The Historical Paradox: Kelantan as the "Paris of Malaya"

During the interwar years, Kelantan underwent a significant socio-economic transformation. It emerged as a bustling hub for regional trade, intellectual Malay discourse, publishing, and Islamic education on the East Coast of the Malay Peninsula, earning the contemporary moniker "Paris of Malaya" (Nik Anuar, 2003). However, this cultural and economic golden age was a double-edged sword. The expanding footprint of British colonial administration brought secularizing influences that disrupted the traditional social fabric. The rapid growth of urban centers inadvertently fostered severe social vulnerabilities, most notably systemic prostitution, gambling, and a perceived dilution of Islamic moral standards among the local populace. This profound civilizational crisis necessitated a robust institutional intervention capable of navigating the destabilizing forces of colonial modernization without jeopardizing the state's spiritual foundations. Consequently, the MAIK, established and mobilized under the administrative stewardship of Dato' Perdana (Nik Ahmad Kamil), emerged as the primary mechanism of structural defense against expanding socio-moral pathologies. When evaluated through a Khaldunian lens, MAIK's targeted policies reveal a deliberate, systematic operationalization of the tenets of *'Umrān* (civilization). The administration keenly recognized that material expansion and bureaucratic modernization, if divorced from rigorous ethical and spiritual safeguards, would inevitably precipitate systemic civilizational decay a paradigm that directly mirrors Ibn Khaldun's cyclical theory of societal collapse.

Religion (*Al-Din*) as the Foundation for Social Transformation

In Khaldunian sociology, genuine religious adherence is the primary mechanism for social regulation. It redirects human behavior away from self-interest and moral decay toward collective ethical responsibility (Ibn Khaldun, 2005). Historically, the deep-rooted integration of Islam in Kelantan had systematically dismantled superstitious, pre-Islamic practices, shifting the community toward a unified monotheistic worldview (*Tawhid*). However, Dato' Perdana observed that the moral challenges of the "Paris of Malaya" era occurred because many citizens practiced Islam as a passive, inherited tradition rather than a deeply understood framework for living.

To rectify this spiritual vulnerability, Dato' Perdana initiated two major institutional reforms:

1. **Intellectual Revitalization:** He systematically brought Islamic scholar Tok Kenali to lead large-scale, structured theological and jurisprudential lectures at the state's central spiritual hub, Masjid Besar Muhammadi in Kota Bharu (Abdullah, 2015). This initiative transformed the mosque from a quiet place of worship into an active center of public education.
2. **Infrastructural Expansion:** The administration rapidly built regional mosques and prayer halls (*surau*) across the state to serve as community anchor points. Historical records indicate that the number of gazetted mosques grew from 283 in 1931 to 303 by 1940 (MAIK, 1940). This infrastructural expansion decentralized religious education, creating a state-wide network that reinforced social morality at the grassroots level.

Elite *Asabiyyah* and Institutional Solidarity

A central tenet of Ibn Khaldun's theory is *Asabiyyah*, which translates to group feeling, social cohesion, or collective solidarity. Ibn Khaldun argued that no political power or civilizational project can succeed without a strong foundation of *Asabiyyah* among its leadership and populace. In the context of British colonial rule, the preservation of a distinct Malay-Muslim identity became the primary defense against total cultural assimilation.

Dato' Perdana cultivated this solidarity by forming a strategic alliance known as the *Pemimpin Bertiga* or The Triumvirate Leaders. This coalition brought together secular bureaucrats and traditional religious scholars (*ulama*), pairing the administrative skills of Dato' Perdana and Dato' Laksamana with the moral authority of Tok Kenali. With the formal endorsement of Sultan Muhammad IV, this elite alliance established MAIK in 1915. By centralizing the management of religious affairs, public education, *zakat* (alms), and *wakaf* (charitable endowments), MAIK unified the state under a structured administrative system. This institutionalized *Asabiyyah* effectively counterbalanced the secularizing pressures of British colonial policy, ensuring that the state's modernization remained anchored in its indigenous identity.

Political Wisdom and Legal Architecture (*Siyasah & Al-Shariah*)

Ibn Khaldun asserted that civilizational survival requires stable political institutions and an enforceable legal framework. A just, functioning administration provides the security and predictability necessary for commerce, education, and culture to thrive. Within this framework, MAIK served as the formal advisory body to the Sultan, ensuring that state governance remained aligned with Islamic law and Malay custom without involving the religious elite in divisive political factions. Furthermore, *Umran* theory highlights that societal behavior is directly shaped by the legal codes enforced by the state. The open nature of British civil codes at the time had left legal gaps that allowed urban vices to grow unchecked. To address this, Dato' Perdana utilized the State Legislative Council to introduce strict, enforceable religious legislation:

- a) **Notice No. 5 of 1916 (Menjaga Sekalian Perempuan-Perempuan Jahat):** This decree was enacted to curb public prostitution and human trafficking.
- b) **Notice No. 3 of 1919:** This law introduced heavy financial fines, imprisonment, and banishment orders that forced sex workers and pimps at least one mile outside urban centers.

These legal measures re-established social order in the public sphere, demonstrating the Khaldunian principle that stable governance requires a clear alignment between political authority and ethical law. When evaluated through Ibn Khaldun's Theory of *Umran*, the administrative legacy of Dato' Perdana and MAIK between 1915 and 1945 offers an instructive historical case study in socio-religious governance. Faced with the destabilizing cultural impacts of colonial modernization during the "Paris of Malaya" era, the administration did not retreat into isolationism or rely solely on punitive measures. Instead, they pursued a balanced approach to civilizational reconstruction. By integrating religious education (*Al-Din*), institutional solidarity (*Asabiyyah*), and targeted legal frameworks (*Siyasah & Al-Shariah*), Dato' Perdana's administration constructed a resilient social ecosystem. This historical model supports the core Khaldunian premise: while material and economic growth are vital components of a civilization (*umran*), they can only be sustained over the long term if they are anchored by strong institutional justice and a shared moral foundation.

METHODOLOGY

To achieve a comprehensive understanding of the socio political dynamics during a transformative era in Kelantanese history, this study adopts a qualitative research design rooted in a socio political history and cultural heritage framework. To capture the complex dynamics of regional governance and institutional leadership, this project employs a dual historical-sociological approach. This specialized methodological lens evaluates the reciprocal, symbiotic relationship between Kelantan's socio-cultural evolution was specifically the socio moral crisis of the "Paris of Malaya" era and the strategic administrative interventions executed by Dato' Perdana within the *Kelantan Islamic Religious and Malay Customs Council (MAIK)* (MAIK).

Operationally, this study utilizes narrative analysis and phenomenological frameworks. These methodologies are deployed across three critical analytical dimensions, beginning with the life-history and institutional arc that traces the chronological background of Dato' Perdana, his tenure at MAIK, and his targeted civilizational strategies to mitigate the "Paris of Malaya" moral vulnerabilities. The second dimension focuses on the integration of internal and external sources, analyzing internal institutional accounts alongside external evaluations written by contemporary scholars on his socio-political administration. Finally, the third dimension

involves a triangulated conceptual synthesis, combining these empirical findings into a unified model that advances a new paradigm for indigenous Islamic administrative leadership. To achieve these dimensions successfully, a complete chronological narrative focusing on Dato' Perdana's administrative leadership within MAIK is maintained. Furthermore, to ensure deep empirical validity and data saturation, data collection was conducted via rigorous desk research, semi-structured interviews, and field observations. Extensive archival investigations were carried out across several premier institutional repositories, including the libraries of University Malaysia of Kelantan, University Kebangsaan of Malaysia, University Malaya and lastly Universiti Sains Malaysia. The documentary analysis prioritized foundational texts, local edicts, and specialized state journals focusing on Kelantanese heritage and administration, such as *Sejarah, Adat dan Warisan Kelantan, Warisan Kelantan, Kala Tanah Air*, and MAIK's historical publication, *Puri Kencana*. These secondary data points were supplemented with peer-reviewed journal articles, historical newspapers, and verified electronic archives to cross-reference localized administrative policies against broader colonial socio-political developments and scholars' conceptual understandings of governance models.

Primary empirical data were gathered through intensive, face-to-face semi-structured interviews with five purposively selected expert informants who met strict inclusion criteria. Each informant possessed deep, expert knowledge of Kelantan's political history, held direct academic or historical expertise regarding the administrative era of Dato' Perdana and MAIK, and demonstrated a willingness to provide verifiable historical testimonies. The expert panel comprised prominent historians, political scientists, and cultural heritage scholars specializing in the historical governance of Kelantan. The inquiry was guided by an interview protocol divided into five distinct thematic axes: the demographic and professional profiles of the informants, Dato' Perdana's administrative leadership within the MAIK apparatus, the institutional and political dynamics of MAIK, the socio-religious policies and legislative measures of MAIK, and the personality traits of Dato' Perdana alongside the strategic counter-model against the "Paris of Malaya" phenomenon. Hence to supplement and validate these interview data, participant observation techniques were employed. This involved immersive field recording, active listening, and close engagement with the local heritage communities and institutional repositories connected to the research site. This hands-on observation served as an empirical cross-check, allowing the researcher to triangulate field realities with archival data and oral testimonies, thereby improving the study's overall objectivity, validity, and reliability.

The analytical framework for this qualitative study establishes a clear relationship between historical administrative inputs, serving as the independent variables, and the resulting governance outcomes, serving as the dependent variable. The primary focus of analysis in the dependent variable was the *Model to Mitigate the "Paris of Malaya" Crisis in Kelantan*. Following established theoretical guidelines in administrative literature, this model is measured using both objective and subjective parameters. The objective measurement evaluates the functional output and formal administrative decisions enacted by Dato' Perdana during his official tenure in MAIK. Conversely, the subjective measurement analyses the long-term institutional evolution, strategic vision, and governance legacy left by Dato' Perdana, which continues to shape contemporary Islamic administrative frameworks in the state.

The conceptual framework includes four primary independent variables that drove the success of the mitigation model: the political leadership of MAIK, the administrative policies of MAIK, the institutional machinery of MAIK, and the personality traits of Dato' Perdana. The qualitative metrics used to evaluate these variables were adapted from established leadership instruments and customized to fit a Khaldunian paradigm. This allowed specific inquiry codes to be grouped into five qualitative indicators, namely Empowerment Leadership, Ibn Khaldun's Human Capital Development, Ibn Khaldun's *Umrani* Islamic Leadership, Servant Leadership, and Social Change Leadership Approaches. By applying this comprehensive, non-point qualitative framework, the study preserves a highly reliable, nuanced, and historically accurate interpretation of Kelantan's socio-political governance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this historical-sociological inquiry reveal that the transformation of Kelantan during the late

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was not merely an administrative transition, but a profound socio-structural disruption. The intersection of British colonial capitalism, legal rationalization, and geopolitical reconfiguration triggered a systematic erosion of indigenous social control mechanisms. This discussion interprets these dynamics through three interconnected qualitative themes: the commercialization of vice as a symptom of structural vulnerability, the institutional decoupling of secular and religious authority, and the strategic deployment of legal modernization as an instrument of political subjection.

Prostitution as a Socio-Moral Phenomenon in Structural Vulnerabilities and Colonial Modernization

The expansion of institutionalized prostitution in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century British Malaya provides a stark lens through which the sociological dimensions of social dysfunction can be examined. Far from being an isolated moral failure, transactional sex emerged as a systemic response to shifting socio-economic conditions. Sociological discourse identifies this phenomenon and operationally defined as the exchange of sexual services for financial or material remuneration such as the manifestation of acute structural vulnerabilities, including systemic poverty, marital dissolution, economic displacement, and marginalized efforts toward rapid upward social mobility (Lim, 1998; Mahani Musa, 2020).

While clandestine forms of transactional sex existed within pre-colonial Malay society, the practice was highly restricted, socially ostracized, and demographically contained. This containment was a direct function of the pervasive influence of *adat* (customary laws) and Islamic ethical codes, which formed a cohesive normative framework for community behavior. However, the expansion of colonial capitalism and accelerated urbanization under British administration fundamentally altered this socio-cultural ecology (Mahani Musa, 2020). The rapid growth of secular entertainment industries and red-light districts introduced Western cultural norms that directly disrupted indigenous values, particularly among the Malay-Muslim majority.

This cultural shift provoked intense anxieties among indigenous intellectual and religious elites. The adoption of Western lifestyles, fashion trends, and social behaviors by the younger generation was interpreted not merely as a shift in taste, but as an existential threat to the preservation of Malay-Muslim identity (Mahani Musa, 2020). Orthodox Islamic theology explicitly classifies extra-marital sexual relations as a severe moral and legal transgression (*zina*), strictly prohibited under Shariah law (Haryati Hassan, 1998). Consequently, the public sphere—as reflected in contemporary vernacular and English-language press debates—became a ideological battleground where public concern over the changing role, representation, and perceived moral degradation of modern women was fiercely contested.

Colonial Secularization and the Erosion of Social Control in Kelantan

Kelantan's integration into the British colonial sphere catalyzed a disruptive socio-moral transformation, accelerating rapidly after the 1903 appointment of the Siamese-commissioned British Adviser, W.A. Graham. The colonial restructuring of the state's administrative machinery deliberately marginalized pre-existing Shariah courts, thereby weakening traditional mechanisms of social control. This institutional erosion correlated directly with an observed increase in moral dislocation, public indecency, and sexual misconduct among the native population. Furthermore, the introduction of Westernized education models—initially restricted to the royal court and the ruling elite—altered the traditional leadership paradigm by structurally separating secular administrative duties from religious responsibilities.

The resultant expansion of commercialized vice within Kelantanese society is empirically documented in the historical ledgers of the MAIK. Shariah court records and administrative registries show that institutionalized prostitution, close proximity (*khalwat*), and illicit cohabitation posed persistent enforcement challenges for the council. Archival files preserved at the National Archives of Malaysia provide clear qualitative evidence of the scale of these socio-moral challenges during Kelantan's paradoxical "Paris of Malaya" era:

- MAIK File PMK 63/1920: Contains detailed registries documenting the operation of systemic, institutionalized prostitution networks within urban municipalities.

- MAIK File 187/1919: Records the state execution of anti-*khalwat* mandates, detailing the state-sanctioned arrest of a local woman, Kalsom binti Mamat, alongside multiple male co-defendants.
- MAIK File 6/1922 & File 211/1922: Detail comprehensive law enforcement crackdowns targeting vagrant women and cohabiting couples within rapidly urbanizing public spaces.

These internal institutional documents demonstrate that the social disorders confronting Kelantanese society were structurally linked to the changing political and legal landscape introduced by the colonial administration. By stripping traditional institutions of their coercive enforcement teeth, the colonial state created an institutional vacuum where commercialized vice could proliferate under the protective umbrella of secular administrative indifference. Therefore, the implementation of MAIK's moral and administrative reforms was not met with uniform compliance, rather, a nuanced reading of local memoirs, oral histories, and personal letters reveals a complex spectrum of cooperation, negotiation, and covert resistance across different segments of Kelantanese society. For the emerging Malay mercantile class and the traditional agrarian peasantry, the Council's aggressive regulatory reach provoked distinct reactions. Local personal letters from village headmen (*Penggawa*) frequently reported administrative friction regarding centralized wealth collection (Ibrahim, 1974; Willer, 1977). Meanwhile, the social positioning of younger generations shifted significantly under MAIK's centralized educational reforms at *Masjid Besar Muhammadi* (Roff, 1974; Yusuff & Abdullah, 2007). It was also to the office of Dato' Perdana highlight that while the rural peasantry generally welcomed the suppression of predatory human trafficking networks, they frequently bristled at the financial stringency of centralized *Zakat* collection and the criminalization of traditional syncretic entertainment. Oral histories compiled from families of former cultural practitioners indicate that the spatial displacement of entertainment venues such as mandated to be at least one mile outside urban limits was viewed by local performers as an economic hardship disguised as spiritual purification. Conversely, memoirs from early students at the *Masjid Besar Muhammadi* depict a youth culture that embraced MAIK's intellectual revitalization, viewing the lectures of Tok Kenali as a liberating alternative to both the restrictive traditional feudal hierarchy and the alienating, secularizing trends of British colonial modernity. By contrasting these subaltern perspectives, the study demonstrates that the social consolidation of *Aşabiyyah* was an ongoing process of negotiation rather than a top-down administrative enforcement.

The Political Nexus with Reconfiguration and Administrative Displacement

The primary structural driver of moral dislocation in Kelantan was the re-engineering of political authority brought about by the British Advisory system. Between 1902 and 1945, Kelantan's political governance was repeatedly destabilized by shifting colonial agreements. Prior to foreign intervention, the state had operated under a centralized feudal system of absolute monarchy since approximately 900 CE, with its formal dynastic consolidation occurring under Sultan Muhammad I, who officially established the title of Sultan. In this traditional arrangement, the Sultan held absolute executive, judicial, and religious authority, supported by a network of regional chieftains. Allegiance to the crown was an absolute moral and civic duty, ensuring a highly integrated social order. Before the formal territorial demarcations of 1910, Kelantan maintained complex geopolitical relations with the Kingdom of Siam, sending triennial tributary offerings (*bunga emas*) to Bangkok. While the Kelantanese palace viewed this ritual as a strategic diplomatic gesture designed to preserve regional autonomy, the Siamese court interpreted it as an explicit acknowledgment of vassalage. This long-standing arrangement was permanently disrupted during the reign of Sultan Muhammad IV due to intense Anglo-Siamese competition on the northern frontier of the Malay Peninsula.

Seeking to expand its territorial reach, Great Britain engaged in protracted diplomatic negotiations with Siam, stretching back to the Burney Treaty of 1826. A critical entry point for direct British intervention emerged from a legal and financial dispute between the Siamese government and the Duff Development Company, a British commercial syndicate operating in the Kelantanese hinterlands. To safeguard its broader territorial integrity from European military intervention, Siam conceded to formal negotiations, culminating in the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1902. A deeper interrogation of British administrative correspondence, intelligence reports, and policy documents reveals the calculated, strategic nature of colonial governance and, crucially, its structural limitations. Confidential colonial intelligence files from the Malayan Security Service during the interwar period show that

British officials did not view the "Paris of Malaya" phenomenon with simple moral indifference. Instead, they perceived it through a pragmatic lens of revenue generation and labor management. Colonial policy documents indicate that the British Advisory system systematically introduced secular legal frameworks to dilute indigenous judicial autonomy and manage municipal spaces under the guise of modernization (Arifin & Rosdi, 2020; Rosdi et al., 2022). This expansion was legally contested by local elites who resisted the deliberate subversion of Shariah jurisdictions (Rosdi et al., 2022). Hence, the British always deliberately tolerated the proliferation of entertainment hubs and secular lodging houses because they served as vital recreational outlets for the influx of male migrant laborers, thereby stabilizing the colonial capitalist workforce. Furthermore, administrative correspondence between the British Adviser and the Straits Settlements Governor demonstrates that the colonial state actively sought to frame Kelantan's vibrant cultural practices as "moral decadence" to justify the systematic expansion of secular police surveillance and civil court jurisdictions.

However, these archival sources also expose the stark limitations of British hegemony. Internal memos from the British Adviser's office frequently complained about the "impenetrability" of local networks loyal to MAIK, admitting that the colonial police force was utterly incapable of enforcing secular codes within the villages without triggering widespread civil unrest akin to the 1915 Pasir Puteh uprising. The British were therefore forced into a compromised position of indirect dependency, relying on MAIK to maintain grassroots stability while publicly downplaying the Council's structural power. This diplomatic arrangement placed Kelantan under a transitional administration directed by Siamese-commissioned British officials from 1903 to 1909 (Mohamed bin Nik Mohd Salleh, 1974). On July 24, 1903, W.A. Graham was appointed as the Resident Adviser, alongside H.W. Thomson as Assistant Adviser. While the terms of their appointment ostensibly barred them from interfering in local customs (*adat*) and Islam, the Sultan was legally mandated to follow all administrative instructions issued by Graham. This arrangement reduced the monarch's executive authority to a legal fiction and created a condition of administrative dependency. Although technically acting as agents of the Siamese crown, Graham's bureaucratic reforms were explicitly pro-British. They sought to streamline land tenure, regularize tax collection, and optimize state resources for international capital markets. By replacing decentralized local governance networks with a centralized, secular bureaucracy, these reforms systematically eroded traditional community leadership, paving the way for the socio-moral fragmentation that MAIK would subsequently inherit.

Institutional Cleavage following the 1909 Bangkok Treaty and Legal Rationalization

The signing of the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909 or known as the Bangkok Treaty marked the definitive transition of Kelantan into the British colonial orbit. Designed primarily to delineate imperial spheres of influence and prevent rival European powers from encroaching on the northern Malay frontier, the treaty operated on a geopolitical *quid pro quo*: Siam transferred sovereignty over the Unfederated Malay States (NNMU) such as Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis, and Terengganu hand over to British control in exchange for British financial assistance for railway development. Following the ratification of the treaty, Sir John Anderson issued official correspondence to Sultan Muhammad IV, declaring that Siam had relinquished all authority and that the British Crown would assume sole advisory responsibility. This transfer faced bitter resistance from the northern Malay elites, who condemned the unilateral transfer of sovereignty without local consultation. Despite this resistance, Sultan Muhammad IV acquiesced following the delivery of *The End of Siamese Suzerainty over Kelantan* by the Siamese official Phra Phisa on July 19, 1909. This was formalized by the Anglo-Kelantan Agreement of October 24, 1910, witnessed by key British and Malay dignitaries. With the appointment of James Scott Mason as the first official British Adviser, Kelantan's administrative, infrastructural, and legal frameworks were systematically overhauled to match Western colonial models. Roads, postal systems, and land offices were established to maximize economic extraction and bureaucratic efficiency. However, this aggressive structural imposition generated deep socio-economic grievances among the local peasantry, culminating in the Pasir Puteh uprising of 1915 led by Tok Janggut in a rebellion that reflected a profound structural rejection of British fiscal policies and the subversion of traditional governance.

The Subversion of Indigenous Jurisprudence

Prior to British intervention, Kelantan possessed an organic, evolving legal ecosystem. Under Long Yunus, governance was guided by the *Hukum Kanun Adat Negeri* and the *Tahapus Kelantan*, which served as codified customary laws maintaining public order and suppressing property crimes. This indigenous framework evolved alongside the mid-nineteenth-century golden age of Islamic scholarship in Kelantan, leading to the institutionalization of Shariah courts in the 1830s under Sultans Muhammad I and II.

By the reign of Sultan Mansur, a sophisticated dual judicial system had been established:

Judicial Branch	Presiding Authority	Jurisdictional Scope
Adat (Customary) Court (<i>Est. 1896</i>)	Chief Judge (<i>Hakim</i>)	Criminal offenses, civil disputes, and public order violations.
Shariah Court	State-appointed <i>Mufti</i> / <i>Kadi</i>	Canonical Islamic law, matrimonial issues, and moral transgressions.
State Court	The Sultan & Council	Supreme appellate authority; capital offenses and high state matters.

This indigenous legal structure was backed by a state prison system and a localized police force, demonstrating that pre-colonial Kelantan possessed a fully functioning legal apparatus capable of maintaining societal equilibrium. However, British administrators viewed this indigenous jurisprudence through an orientalist lens, dismissing it as outdated, arbitrary, and incompatible with international capitalist enterprise. Under the guise of "administrative modernization" and "legal rationalization," colonial officials introduced sweeping reforms designed to replace traditional mechanisms with Western legal frameworks. The real objective of these legal reforms was twofold: first, to consolidate colonial political hegemony by criminalizing indigenous dissent and political opposition; second, to deliberately weaken the authority of the Sultan and the Malay-Muslim aristocracy by stripping them of their judicial powers. By isolating the Sultan's jurisdiction strictly to the private domains of *adat* and religion, the colonial state effectively decoupled law from morality. The traditional courts were reduced to subordinate status within a secularized judicial hierarchy controlled by the British Adviser. Consequently, while the colonial state successfully institutionalized structures for economic exploitation, it systematically dismantled the holistic legal and moral framework that had historically preserved social cohesion within Kelantanese society.

Internal structural dynamics through factional management and institutional continuity

The sustained structural resilience of MAIK cannot be attributed solely to its external policies, it was fundamentally a product of its internal governance architecture and the sophisticated management of its internal political dynamics. Operating as a hybrid institution, MAIK's internal hierarchy had to constantly balance two potentially competing factions: the traditional, orthodox *Ulama* (represented by figures like Tok Kenali) and the Western-educated, secular aristocrats and bureaucrats (led by Dato' Perdana). Under less capable leadership, this structural cleavage could have paralyzed the Council. However, evaluated through the Khaldunian framework of *'Aşabiyyah*, this internal dynamic was managed through an intentional policy of functional compartmentalization and consensus-building (*Shura*).

Institutional Faction	Core Competency	Primary Governance Role within MAIK	Khaldunian Dimension
Traditional Ulama	Religious Jurisprudence & Moral Legitimacy	Curriculum design, theological decrees, grassroots preaching at Masjid Muhammadi.	Al-Dīn (Spiritual Foundation)
Secular Bureaucrats	Administrative Literacy & Colonial Diplomacy	Fiscal management, <i>Zakat</i> auditing, legislative drafting, British liaison.	\$Siyāsah\$ (Political/Legal Execution)

Decision-making within MAIK was structured so that neither faction could unilaterally dominate the other. For instance, when drafting *Notice No. 3 of 1919* to curb urban vices, the secular bureaucratic faction provided the legal-rational language necessary to withstand British vetoes in the State Legislative Council, while the *Ulama* faction provided the theological justification required to ensure unquestioned compliance from the Malay population. This internal equilibrium created a unified institutional elite, preventing the British administration from exploiting internal divisions to undermine indigenous governance. The centralization of socio-religious power within MAIK effectively structured the state's traditional administrative apparatus into a modernized civil bureau (Mohd Roslan, 2011; Zaini, 2004). This internal structural cohesion also allowed indigenous authorities to maintain systemic stability despite the socio-moral pressures of urbanization (Zainal Abidin & Haji Hamzah, 2018).

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the socio-political and legal transformation of Kelantan between 1909 and 1945, focusing on the impact of British colonial intervention and the subsequent institutional responses by local leadership and Islamic authorities. By tracing the historical trajectory from the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909 and the Anglo-Kelantan Agreement of 1910 to the consolidation of British administrative control, the study demonstrates that Kelantan underwent profound structural changes in its governance, legal system, and socio-cultural order during the early twentieth century. These transformations significantly altered the traditional Malay political framework, in which the Sultan and religious scholars previously played central roles in maintaining administrative stability and moral governance. The findings indicate that British colonial rule introduced a centralized bureaucratic system that progressively weakened indigenous governance structures. Although presented as a process of administrative modernization, these reforms were fundamentally driven by colonial economic and political interests, particularly the need to secure control over resources and strengthen imperial influence in the region. The appointment of British advisers, beginning with James Scott Mason, marked a decisive shift in executive authority from traditional rulers to colonial administrators. Consequently, the Sultan's role became increasingly symbolic, confined largely to matters of religion and Malay customs, while substantive political and legal authority was transferred to the colonial administration.

A key transformation identified in this study is the restructuring of the legal system. Pre-colonial and early Islamic legal institutions in Kelantan, including adat and Shariah courts, were gradually marginalised and reconfigured under colonial governance. Although these institutions had previously functioned effectively in maintaining social order, British officials perceived them as incompatible with modern legal standards. The introduction of colonial legal frameworks not only altered judicial practices but also contributed to a decline in the authority of Islamic jurisprudence in regulating moral and social conduct. This legal reorganisation had significant social implications, as it coincided with the rise of urbanisation, labour migration, and economic inequality, which collectively contributed to increasing social tensions, including the spread of prostitution and other forms of moral disorder.

The study also highlights that the phenomenon known as the “Paris of Malaya” emerged as a colonial construct reflecting both socio-economic realities and imperial discourse. While Kelantan experienced cultural vibrancy and economic growth during this period, colonial narratives often emphasised moral decline to justify administrative intervention and legal restructuring. These narratives must therefore be understood critically within the broader context of colonial knowledge production and governance strategies. In response to these challenges, local leadership under Dato' Perdana, together with Islamic scholars such as Tok Kenali and institutional actors like the MAIK, played a crucial role in reasserting Islamic values and reinforcing moral governance. Their efforts included the expansion of religious education, institutional reform, and the implementation of regulatory mechanisms aimed at addressing social issues. From the perspective of Ibn Khaldun's theory of *'Umrān*, these initiatives reflect an attempt to restore civilisational balance by strengthening religion (*al-dīn*), social cohesion (*'aṣabiyyah*), and governance structures (*siyāsah wa al-sharī'ah*). The historical resilience of MAIK demonstrates that effective Islamic governance (*Siyāsah*) is not achieved through isolationism or rigid punitive measures, but through the proactive building of highly adaptive, structurally sound institutions. The historical insights gained from examining Kelantan's administrative strategies between 1915

and 1945 carry profound relevance for contemporary debates on Islamic governance within Malaysia and the wider Muslim world. In an era where modern Islamic administrations frequently struggle to balance rapidly accelerating technological modernization with the preservation of ethical values, the historical model of MAIK offers an instructive template for institutional design.

First, the study demonstrates that the Khaldunian principle of *\$Al-Dīn\$* (religion) is most effective when operationalized not merely as a system of punitive legal prohibitions, but as a comprehensive framework for human capital development and public education. MAIK's success lay in its ability to pair legislative measures against vice with widespread grassroots literacy and institutional welfare through *Zakat* distribution. Furthermore, in multi-ethnic and rapidly modernizing state contexts, the historical alliance of the *Pemimpin Bertiga* (The Triumvirate) highlights the necessity of building an internal elite consensus (*Aṣabiyyah*) that bridges the gap between technical-bureaucratic experts and religious scholars. When modern religious institutions become isolated from mainstream policy-making, or when secular administrative systems disregard the ethical identity of their populace, systemic policy failure and social alienation often follow. By proving that an indigenous Islamic institution could co-opt, adapt, and master modern administrative techniques to safeguard its moral core, the historical experience of Kelantan provides a valuable case study. It shows that sustainable civilizational development (*Umrān*) requires a balanced alignment of institutional modernization, administrative transparency, and deeply held ethical values

Overall, this study concludes that Kelantan's colonial experience was not merely a process of political subjugation, but also a complex negotiation between external colonial forces and internal socio-religious institutions. Despite the constraints imposed by colonial rule, local actors demonstrated resilience in preserving Islamic governance structures and social identity. The interaction between colonial administration and indigenous reform movements ultimately shaped a hybrid socio-political order in which modern administrative systems coexisted with traditional Islamic institutions. Future research may further explore comparative analyses between Kelantan and other Malay states to better understand the diversity of colonial experiences and the varying strategies of Islamic institutional adaptation across the region.

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