

The Malacca Sultanate: Power Struggle between Tun Ali and Tun Perak (1445-1456)

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Abstract

The Malacca Sultanate (established in 1402 as a port-kingdom however; it became known as the Malacca Sultanate since 1445) saw an extraordinary incident in its history. In 1445, a far-reaching bloody coup d'état took place and the coup permanently changed the features of politics of the kingdom. Following the coup, a non-Malay Tamil and the leader of the coup d'état named Tun Ali was appointed as the Bendahara or Prime Minister of the Malacca Sultanate by the new ruler Sultan Muzaffar Shah. Before long, he got involved in a power struggle and political rivalry with Tun Perak, a member of the former Bendahara family of Malacca. Once started, the political rivalry between Tun Ali and Tun Perak took a serious turn. The Sultanate was in danger of being destroyed due to their intensive and prolonged power struggle (1445-1456). However, Sultan Muzaffar Shah's meticulous and skillful management of the situation resulted in a peaceful end to the ten-year power struggle. This article first sheds light on the background of the power struggle and then highlights Sultan Muzaffar Shah's masterful handling of the circumstances for which a peaceful resolution of the struggle was possible. The primary sources including two versions of the *Sejarah Melayu* (The Malay Annals) and Tome Pires' the *Suma Oriental* are used to prepare this research article; however, secondary sources are also consulted.

Key Words: Bendahara, Malacca Sultanate, Malays, power struggle, Sultan Muzaffar Shah, Tamil, Tun Ali, Tun Perak.

Introduction

Historically, Parameswara, a Hindu prince from Palembang in Sumatra, founded Malacca as a trading port on the western coast of the Malay Peninsula in South-East Asia in 1402. In the *Sejarah Melayu*¹ (The Malay Annals) he is known as Raja Secandar (Leyden, 1821, p. 85) or Sultan Iskandar Shah [hereinafter Parameswara] (Brown, 1952, pp. 50-51).² Due to the farsighted political decisions and judicious economic policies of Parameswara and his successors, Malacca rapidly saw economic and political success. By 1444, when the third ruler, Sultan Muhammad Shah (1424-1444), who had also a Hindu title of Sri Maharaja, died, Malacca had acquired the status of a port-kingdom with a thriving economy and an established governmental structure. In 1445, the Malacca kingdom witnessed an unusual event in its history. A bloody coup d'état led by a non-Malay Tamil Muslim named Tun Ali took place in Malacca which had permanently changed the course and nature of the politics of the kingdom.³

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The 1445 coup d'état was soon followed by a power-struggle and political rivalry that took place between the coup-maker Tun Ali and Tun Perak, a member of the Malay Bendahara family. In Malacca's political history, it was an intensive decade-long (1445-1456) power struggle between Tun Ali and Tun Perak, which had put the very existence of the Malacca Sultanate in jeopardy by dividing the court into two rival factions: non-Malay Tamils and the Malays. Eventually, the deleterious power struggle which threatened the Malacca Sultanate was peacefully and skillfully resolved by Sultan Muzaffar Shah. This article first explains the historical context of the power struggle. Then it highlights Sultan Muzaffar Shah's skillful management of the situations relating to the power struggle that made a peaceful end to the conflict possible.

Background of the Power Struggle

The third ruler of the Malacca kingdom Sultan Muhammad Shah (who also retained a Hindu title of Sri Maharaja) had a Tamil wife named Tun Rana Wati (or Tun Uti). By her, he had his elder son Raja Kasim. Raja Kasim distinguished himself by excellent manner and good conduct and he was loved by most of the subjects and chiefs of the Malacca kingdom (Leyden, 1821, pp. 111-112). Sultan Muhammad Shah had another wife of Malay blood—the princess of Rokan in Sumatra. By her, he had a second son—Raja Ibrahim. Influenced by his second wife (the Princess of Rokan) Sultan Muhammad Shah nominated his second son Raja Ibrahim his successor (Leyden, 1821, p. 111; Brown, 1952, p. 61). Raja Ibrahim ascended the throne of the Malacca kingdom; however, like his father, he also retained a Hindu name—Sri Parameswara Deva Shah (Winstedt, 1934, p. 45).⁴ Since the choice of succession did not reflect the choice of the citizens of the Malacca kingdom, it soon gave birth to strong grievances among them and royal courtiers of the kingdom and thus it invited their angry reaction. This state of the political situation in Malacca along with other factors (which are not explained here)⁵ including the reactions against the continuation of Hinduism in Malacca by the minor ruler Raja Ibrahim, eventually resulted in the 1445 bloody coup d'état in Malacca. The coup cost the lives of the minor ruler of the Malacca kingdom Raja Ibrahim and his guardian the raja of Rokan. In the coup, Raja Kasim's Tamil maternal uncle Tun Ali played the key role and appeared as the king-maker. He succeeded in bringing his nephew Raja Kasim to power, who assumed the title Sultan Muzaffar Shah. As a result, the 1445 coup d'état in Malacca, which was carried out by Tun Ali, had far-reaching effects⁶ including the establishment of the non-Malay Tamils' supremacy over the Malays. This issue, in line with other issues, finally resulted in the 1445 coup d'état, which in turn ended in the power struggle and political rivalry between these two communities in Malacca. However, the power struggle, which lasted for a decade ultimately centered on two famous figures of two communities: Tamil Tun Ali and Malay Tun Perak. Several factors accounted for the power struggle between Tun Ali and Tun Perak. These are reviewed below under the following sub-headings.

a. The Non-Malay Tamil Supremacy in the Politics of the Malacca Sultanate

The first reason that initiated the power struggle between Tun Ali and Tun Perak was the establishment of non-Malay Tamil supremacy in the Malacca Sultanate over the Malay in the wake of the 1445 coup d'état. As stated, Malacca witnessed a bloody palace coup d'état in 1445. Before the 1445 coup d'état, the minor ruler of Malacca Raja Ibrahim (son of Sultan Muhammad Shah by a Malay wife) was under the tutelage of his maternal uncle—the raja of Rokan while he had been cared for by the aged Bendahara (Prime Minister) Sri Amar Diraja. Sri Amar Diraja died shortly after the murder of Raja Ibrahim in the 1445 coup d'état. His post had passed to his son Sriwa Raja. They were all Malays. The 1445 coup d'état in Malacca brought Raja Kasim (who assumed the title of Sultan Muzaffar Shah) to power and established Tamil supremacy in the court of Malacca. A Tamil named Tun Ali led the 1445 coup d'état and helped his nephew Raja Kasim or Sultan Muzaffar Shah (hereinafter Sultan Muzaffar Shah) to bring power. The assuming of power in Malacca by Sultan Muzaffar Shah, therefore, naturally witnessed the growing influence of Tamil Tun Ali and his political circles.

With the increase of the Tamil influence in the Malacca court, the power and prestige of the Malays quickly diminished. For example, during the time of the 1445 coup, Sri Amar Diraja was Bendahara (Prime Minister). After his death, Sultan Muzaffar Shah appointed Sri Amar Diraja's son, Tun Parapati Sedang, another Malay as Bendahara, who assumed the title of Sriwa Raja. Soon, however, this appointment proved to be a mere formality because Sriwa Raja became a Bendahara figurehead in the royal court. He soon found himself an unwanted person in the court of Malacca on the success of Raja Kasim and the rise of Tun Ali's power and prestige (Leyden, 1821, pp. 119). On a certain day, when the Bendahara tried to enter the royal court, he found people shutting the gates of the palace before him. According to the *Sejarah Melayu*, by then Sultan Muzaffar Shah retired to his palace after holding that day's court. Supposing the Sultan was angry with him, the Bendahara returned home oppressed with shame and took poison and died (Leyden, 1821, pp. 119-120; Brown, 1952, pp. 63-64). Richard Winstedt, however, has stated that the power of the Sultan's uncle, the Sri Nara Diraja Tun Ali, grew to such a level that it began to affect the role of the Bendahara Sriwa Raja in the royal court. It was under this circumstance the Bendahara Sriwa Raja poisoned himself from chagrin (Winstedt, 1934, p. 46). According to K. G. Tregonning, Sriwa Raja committed suicide on the success of Raja Kasim and the rise of Tun Ali's power and prestige in the court (Tregonning, 1964, p. 34; Hall, 1981, p. 226), while J. Kennedy has stated that Sriwa Raja poisoned himself either from disappointment, frustration, or remorse [for not protecting the minor ruler Raja Kasim] (Kennedy, 1962, p. 11). Sriwa

Raja's demise allowed Sultan Muzaffar Shah to nominate his maternal uncle Tun Ali, the soul of the 1445 coup d'état, to the position of Bendahara. With this appointment of Tun Ali to the position of Bendahara of the Malacca Sultanate, the power and influence of the non-Malays over the Malays in the Malacca court was complete.

The new status of Tun Ali, which he held for a decade (1445-1456), intensified the ongoing Tamil-Malay power struggle in the politics of the Malacca Sultanate, now involving Tun Perak, the son of the deceased Bendahara Sriwa Raja, directly. Because Tun Ali, who had been appointed Bendahara was unpopular with the rival Malay party, which found a leader in Tun Perak (Cady, 1964, 158). It is pertinent to state that Sriwa Raja had three children. The eldest was a daughter named Tun Kudu, who became the wife of Sultan Muzaffar Shah. The others were two sons: Tun Perak and Tun Parapati Puti. Tun Perak did not hold any office in Malacca until his father was alive. Given the intense and turbulent political situation prevailing in the Malacca court in the aftermath of the 1445 coup d'état as just stated, neither Tun Ali would tolerate Tun Perak nor Tun Perak himself would feel comfortable enjoying any office in the capital for the simple reason that Tun Perak's father committed suicide on the rise of Tun Ali as stated above. Hence, Tun Perak left Malacca for a peaceful life and went away to Klang (north-west of Malacca near Pahang), where he married and settled down. After some time, he was made the chief of Klang by Sultan Muzaffar Shah at the request of the people of Klang. J. Kennedy has identified Tun Perak's withdrawal from Malacca to Klang as the 'second coup d'état' and the main victim of this coup was Tun Perak for the simple reason that a complete change had taken place in the Bendahara family (Kennedy, 1962, p. 11). Before the appointment of Tun Ali as Malacca's Bendahara, the rulers of Malacca generally appointed their Bendahara from the former Bendahara family. Tun Ali's appointment was made depriving Tun Perak and that is why, he opted for a life at Klang. At the same time, the appointment of Tun Ali as the Bendahara of the Malacca Sultanate brought Tun Perak to the forefront of the ongoing rivalry between the non-Malay and the Malay in Malacca. In the power struggle that followed between Tun Ali and Tun Perak, the Malays largely supported Tun Perak, while the Tamils and others in Malacca backed Tun Ali (Tregonning, 1964, p. 34).

b. The Fame of Tun Perak after Malacca's First Military Victory over Siam

The fame of Tun Perak in the royal court of Malacca following the Sultanate's first military victory over Siam in 1445, in which Tun Perak skillfully assumed command, was another major factor in the political rivalry and power struggle between Bendahara Tun Ali and Tun Perak. Historically, the hostility that had been brewing between Malacca and Siam since the time of Malacca's founder, Parameswara, took a new turn in military engagements during the reign of Sultan

Muzaffar Shah. The time when Malacca experienced a palace coup d'état in 1445, the Siamese made an effort to enforce their claim to suzerainty over the south of the Malay Peninsula, including Malacca. The *Sejarah Melayu* or the Malay Annals records that during the reign of Sultan Muzaffar Shah, the Siamese King Bubunnya (P'hu-bun-yang) sent an envoy to Malacca demanding a letter of submission. Sultan Muzaffar Shah flatly refused to send any submissions. Having learned that Malacca's ruler had refused to own allegiance to Siam, its king Bubunnya got furious and ordered a military expedition to Malacca. Accordingly, the Siamese war chief Awi Chakra was preparing to command the military expedition against Malacca overland to Ulu Pahang (Leyden, 1821, p. 121; Brown, 1952, p. 64). Upon learning the news Sultan Muzaffar Shah ordered his men to foil the attack. Sultan Muzaffar Shah also ordered all men of the outlying districts to be assembled in Malacca. Tun Perak, then chief of Klang, was ordered to lead the Malacca men against the Siamese forces. Soon, a war between Malacca and Siam took place and, in this war, the powerful Siamese forces had to experience an ignominious defeat and withdrew. Thus, the first military encounter between Malacca and Siam ended with a stunning victory for the former over the latter. The first military victory of the Malacca Sultanate over Siam appeared as a threat to Tun Ali's political career in the capital. The victory was the most significant part due to the outstanding and effective leadership and extraordinary war strategy of Tun Perak. Tun Perak's war strategy was very impressive. On the approach of the Siamese forces, Sultan Muzaffar Shah ordered all men to be gathered to defend Malacca. Tun Perak, who was from Klang (an outlying district) at that time, brought his men along with their wives. Then, he proceeded with his fighting forces to fight the Siamese. By bringing the Klang men's wives, Tun Perak ensured that the men were going to fight with all their might to defend their loved ones in Malacca since Tun Perak was particularly determined that Malacca would be well defended. Thus, during Malacca's war with Siam in 1445, Tun Perak demonstrated his administrative and military leadership to Sultan Muzaffar Shah. As a result, Tun Perak gained a great deal of fame in the Malacca court following this military triumph. Tun Ali, Tun Perak's political rival, was not in a position to tolerate such a growing reputation of Tun Perak in Malacca. Consequently, when Tun Perak's reputation in Malacca was at its height following the Malacca Sultanate's first military victory over Siam, the power struggle between Tun Ali and Tun Perak intensified substantially.

c. Sultan Muzaffar Shah's Three Decisions Pushed the Power Struggle to its Zenith

The power struggle that began in 1445 between Tun Ali and Tun Perak was greatly affected and made more intense by three decisions taken by Sultan Muzaffar Shah. In actuality, these decisions were made following the Malacca

Sultanate's first military triumph over its longtime political foe, Siam, and as just noted, for the most part; credit went to Tun Perak for the victory. There is no doubt that every decision of Sultan Muzaffar Shah acted as an important catalyst in the ongoing power struggle between Tun Ali and Tun Perak.

Sultan Muzaffar Shah's first decision was crucial and seemed to be in the Sultanate's favor, but it greatly incensed Tun Ali. After Malacca's historic victory over Siam, Sultan Muzaffar Shah desired for Tun Perak to stay in the capital. Sultan Muzaffar Shah expressed his desire following a meeting with Tun Perak in the wake of Malacca's victory against Siam. Following Tun Perak's military victory over the Siamese, he came to Malacca to meet Sultan Muzaffar Shah at Malacca. The people of Klang complained to the Sultan that Tun Perak had sent their wives to Malacca against their will before the start of the war against Siam and they sought justice for that. Previously, Sultan Muzaffar Shah had commanded all men to assemble to defend Malacca as Siam began its invasion. At that time, Tun Perak, who was from the nearby district of Klang, sent his men with their wives. He then started attacking the Siamese with his fighting forces. Tun Perak was particularly determined that Malacca would be well protected; therefore, by bringing the Klang men's wives, Tun Perak was ensuring that the men would battle with all their might to defend their loved ones in Malacca. Therefore, when asked by the Sultan, Tun Perak argued that he had brought the women of Klang to Malacca because the men would fight for the safety of their beloved wives and in this way, they would engage their all efforts to defend the Malacca Sultanate. The Sultan was so moved by the argument that he declared it to be his will that Tun Perak reside in Malacca at once. Sultan Muzaffar Shah then permitted Tun Perak to remain in Malacca. The ongoing power struggle between Tun Ali and Tun Perak became more intense as a result of this first decision of Sultan Muzaffar Shah.

The second decision of Sultan Muzaffar Shah that deepened the current power struggle and political rivalry between Tun Ali and Tun Perak was the promotion of Tun Perak to a Court Chamberlain and conferring him the title of *Paduca Raja* (Your Majesty or Your Highness).⁷ Tun Perak was given this title with the same rank as the Sri Nara Diraja Tun Ali by Sultan Muzaffar Shah and was ordered to take a seat in the Malacca court next to Tun Ali. This, in fact, made Tun Ali feel more wounded, which only fueled his political rivalry with Tun Perak. In fact, after conferring honours and titles to Tun Perak, a sharp friction arose between Tun Ali and Tun Perak because after this Tun Perak became a great man in the Malacca Sultanate and half of the Malays leaned towards him while half of them sided with Tun Ali (Leyden, 1821, p. 127; Kennedy, 1962, p. 11).

The third and final decision of Sultan Muzaffar Shah that had a significant impact on the struggle for power between Tun Ali and Tun Perak was his intention (which he made public later) to appoint Tun Perak the Bendahara of the

Malacca Sultanate. He made his decision public at a time while his maternal uncle Tun Ali was still in the office of Bendahara. This announcement by the Sultan pushed the power struggle between Tun Ali and Tun Perak to its zenith. The announcement angered Tun Ali hugely, who did not wish to tolerate Tun Perak's equality in the royal court, let alone his appointment as Bendahara in his place. It is beyond doubt that the Sultan's three decisions, which came one after the other, not only accelerated the tension between the two political rivals but also added a new dimension to their ongoing power struggle. As a result, their mutual enmity and struggle for power only worsened and continued unabated.

The Course and Nature of the Power Struggle

There is no doubt that the beginning of the power struggle between Tun Ali and Tun Perak in Malacca was a disadvantageous episode for the Malacca Sultanate itself. The Siamese military attack against Malacca at the beginning of the power struggle in Malacca began constituted a severe threat to the Malacca Sultanate's very existence. Against this background, Sultan Muzaffar Shah turned himself immediately from palace coup d'état to the threat of war with Siam. His forces achieved an outstanding victory against the forces of Siam for the first time in history. Defeated and thrown back, the Siamese did not appear again to give a retaliatory battle against Malacca until 1456, eleven years later. It was during this period the Malacca Sultanate was the scene of this intensive internal struggle for power centering two central politicians of the Malacca Sultanate—the Malacca's Bendahara (Prime Minister) Sri Nara Diraja Tun Ali and Tun Perak—son of the former Bendahara Sriwa Raja. As the power struggle began following the 1445 coup d'état wherein some issues acted as catalysts (as explained above), and the political rivalry between Tun Ali and Tun Perak only intensified with time. The Malacca Sultanate's military triumph over Siam, which was largely attributable to Tun Perak's decisive leadership, gave the already intense power struggle a new dimension. Following Malacca's victory over Siam, Tun Perak was treated in the Malacca court as a national hero. Tun Ali believed that his position and power would become unstable due to Tun Perak's growing influence and reputation in the Capital. Tun Perak's unusual and outstanding military victory and his war strategy tremendously impressed the Sultan who first desired to keep Tun Perak at Malacca and then to appoint him Bendahara at an opportune moment.

True, Sri Nara Diraja Tun Ali became a great favourite of Sultan Muzaffar Shah, who never in any instance opposed the opinion of Tun Ali or dissented from anything which Tun Ali ever proposed or said; however, the reality was quite different. Sultan Muzaffar Shah's series of decisions regarding Tun Perak's staying at Malacca, giving him a high title and finally expressing the desire to appoint him the Bendahara, not only antagonized Tun Ali but also deepened the

power struggle between Tun Ali and Tun Perak. Historically, Sultan Muzaffar Shah's decisions, which escalated the power struggle to a new level of enmity, ultimately implicated the Sultan himself and his wife, Tun Kudu, who happened to be Tun Perak's sister.

The Role of Tun Kudu in the Escalation of Power Struggle

The involvement of Tun Kudu, sister of Tun Perak and wife of Sultan Muzaffar Shah, also intensified the continuous power struggle between her brother, Tun Perak, and her husband's maternal uncle, Tun Ali. She had a significant influence on the politics of the Malacca Sultanate, as well as the escalation of the ongoing power struggle between Tun Ali and Tun Perak. The *Sejarah Melayu* (The Malay Annals) claims that Sultan Muzaffar Shah never opposed any opinion of the Sri Nara Diraja Tun Ali (Leyden, 1821, pp. 118-119; Brown, 1952, pp. 61-63). Contrary to this fact, the Sultan made three decisions (as explained above) that not only antagonized his maternal uncle and the king-maker after the 1445 coup d'état Tun Ali but also worked against his best interests. The Sultan's permission for Tun Perak to reside in Malacca, his granting the prestigious title Paduca Raja meaning "Your Highness" to Tun Perak and then allowing him to sit next to Tun Ali in the royal court and finally expressing his desire to appoint Tun Perak his Bendahara in place of his uncle Tun Ali all went against Tun Ali's interests. A question may arise in this regard: Why did Sultan Muzaffar Shah make such decisions against the man who had brought him to power in 1445? According to Richard Winstedt, perhaps it was the influence of the Sultan's wife, Tun Kudu—the sister of Tun Perak that compelled the Sultan to take such decisions and ultimately brought her brother to the court of Malacca from Klang where he was a pengulu (Winstedt, 1934, p. 46; Kennedy, 1962, p. 11). Thus, this Malay lady Tun Kudu played a significant part in bringing the case of her brother to the forefront and thus making the political rivalry between her brother Tun Perak and Tun Ali more complicated.⁸

The End of the Power Struggle

There is no denying the fact that Tun Ali and Tun Perak had been bearing bitter enmity towards each other since the start of their political rivalry following the 1445 coup d'état and by the time when Sultan Muzaffar Shah expressed his desire to appoint Tun Perak Malacca's Bendahara, their enmity began to affect the Sultan himself. In this way, a decade went by, and as time passed, their rivalry and struggle for power grew. Hence, a peaceful resolution to the power struggle seemed to be a distant future. However, Sultan Muzaffar Shah's astute and engaging diplomacy contributed a lot to resolving the decade-long power struggle between Tun Ali and Tun Perak in a way that was both peaceful and satisfactory. The question is: How did the Sultan resolve this decade-long power struggle and enmity peacefully? Sultan Muzaffar Shah had been really worried

about the terms on which his two great men Tun Ali, and Tun Perak, were with each other. He was highly concerned that the ongoing rivalry and power struggle between Tun Ali, and Tun Perak would ultimately lead to the destruction of his country in the near future (Leyden, 1821, p. 127). As a master diplomat of his time, he therefore, gave the situation serious thought and worked hard to come up with a solution that would allow him to reconcile his great men. Sultan Muzaffar Shah desired to appoint Tun Perak Bendahara of the Malacca Sultanate following Tun Perak's military victory over the Siamese in 1445. From then, he had repeatedly persuaded Tun Ali to resign in favor of Tun Perak, but Tun Ali never complied. Tun Ali not only opposed the idea of Sultan Muzaffar Shah but also expressed his antagonism for Tun Perak throughout the decade (1445-1456); however, the Sultan waited patiently. Finally, the Sultan adopted a new strategy to accomplish his two goals at once: to fulfill his desire by appointing Tun Perak, his Bendahara, in place of his maternal uncle Tun Ali, but there would be no power struggle, and political rivalry between them at the end of the day.

As part of his astute and masterful diplomacy to find the desired solution. diplomatic efforts, Sultan Muzaffar Shah devised some plans and strategies and put them into action. Although initial plans did not produce the desired results, the final strategy achieved the objective. Sultan Muzaffar Shah first summoned Tun Ali and proposed that he marry again, although he was an old man. When Tun Ali agreed, the Sultan proposed Tun Kanaca, the sister of the former Bendahara Sriwa Raja and the aunt of Tun Perak, as a bride to reconcile the two rivals—Tun Ali and Tun Perak. However, Tun Ali solemnly refused the proposal. The Sultan then tried other proposals, but in every case, Tun Ali answered negatively. At long last, the Sultan offered him his own wife named Tun Kudu, who was the beautiful daughter of former Bendahara Sriwa Raja and sister of Tun Perak, as the price of his resignation (Leyden, 1821, p. 128; Hall, 1981, p. 226). Tun Ali liked the offer since Tun Kudu was the sister of his rival Tun Perak. Therefore, he accepted the offer and agreed to marry her if the Sultan desired so. As soon as the Sultan learned this from Tun Ali, he divorced his wife, Tun Kudu, and sent her back to the home of her brother Tun Perak to await marriage to her new husband. He then ordered Tun Perak to prepare everything for the celebration of her marriage with Tun Ali. When the Islamic lawful term of the divorce expired, Tun Ali married Tun Kudu—the sister of Tun Perak and the ex-wife of Sultan Muzaffar Shah and became Tun Perak's brother-in-law. It seemed that along with the Sultan, Tun Perak and his sister Tun Kudu accepted the desire of Tun Ali. Hence, Tun Kudu, far from objecting, also received the divorce from the Sultan and willingly accepted elderly Tamil Tun Ali as her second husband (Winstedt, 1934, p. 46).

In this way, due to Sultan Muzaffar Shah's extraordinary and engaging diplomatic efforts, Tun Ali and Tun Perak were matrimonially reconciled, and

the two outstanding figures of the Malacca Sultanate started acting as brothers. With this, the bitter power struggle between Tun Ali and Tun Perak, which had covered a decade, came to a peaceful end. Tun Ali now requested the Sultan to appoint Tun Perak the Bendahara of the Malacca Sultanate. The Sultan accordingly appointed Tun Perak, the new Bendahara in 1456 and in this way, he came into his family inheritance while Tun Ali became the *Pengulu* or chief of the Bendaharas (Leyden, 1821, pp. 128-129; Brown, 1952, p. 68).⁹ Sultan Muzaffar Shah was able not only to end the decade-long power struggle between Tun Ali and Tun Perak but also, he was able to re-establish good relations and mutual respect between the two rival parties in Malacca: the Malays and the non-Malay Tamils. Thus, the decade-long power struggle was peacefully resolved due to Sultan Muzaffar Shah's careful and expert handling of the situation. To some, what began as a religious conflict in which Hindus yielded to Muslims in the 1445 coup d'état, following the coup, turned into a racial conflict in which Tamils yielded to Malays in 1456 (Tregonning, 1964, p. 34).

Conclusion

The power struggle between non-Malay Tamil Tun Ali and Malay Tun Perak has occupied an important chapter in the history of the Malacca Sultanate. The nerve-centre of their political rivalry was the royal court of Malacca. Historically, before the 1445 coup d'état, the people of Malacca were divided into two opposing camps: the Malays and the non-Malay Tamils over several issues, including choice of succession and Malacca's fourth ruler, Raja Ibrahim's turning to Hinduism. The coup d'état of 1445, which occurred in this context, ultimately propelled the non-Malay Tamils (led by Tun Ali) to the centre of the Malacca Sultanate's politics, depriving the Malays (first led by Sriwa Raja and later by his son Tun Perak) of their influence and standing. Before long, two protagonists of the two communities, Tun Ali of the non-Malay Tamils and Tun Perak of the Malays, engaged in a decade-long power struggle and political rivalry. Their political rivalry and struggle for power not only dangerously exposed the vulnerability of the Malacca Sultanate to its mortal enemy—Siam; it posed a grave threat to the Malacca Sultanate's very survival. Finally, Sultan Muzaffar Shah succeeded in bringing an end to the perilous power struggle and rivalry between Tun Ali and Tun Perak. The Sultan worked out a compromise arrangement in the form of a marriage liaison of Tun Ali with Tun Perak's family while Tun Ali abandoned the post of Bendahara for Tun Perak. Thus, Sultan Muzaffar Shah's prompt action and skillful management of the situation with shrewd and robust diplomacy saved the Malacca Sultanate from impending danger. To resolve the enmity between the twos, Sultan Muzaffar Shah (1445-59) divorced his beautiful wife, Tun Kudu, the elder sister of Tun Perak. She was then married to Tun Ali, who retired and finally, Tun Perak was made the Bendahara (1456-1498), under whom the Malacca Sultanate witnessed its golden

period. By sacrificing his sister, Tun Kudu, Tun Perak thus triumphed in the power struggle his father Sriwa Raja had previously lost to the Sultan's uncle Tun Ali and in this fashion, unity was restored in Malacca between two competing parties. The establishment of harmony between the two contending parties, Malay and non-Malay Tamils helped direct their combined efforts towards state building and expanding Malacca's territory on both shores of the Straits of Malacca at the expense of Malacca's former political rivals Siam and Java (Majapahit).

Notes

1. The original source for the study of the Malacca Sultanate is the *Sejarah Melayu* or the Malay Annals. Through the *Sejarah Melayu* the Malacca Sultanate is represented as a traditional Malay ideal form of government that had a "traditional golden age" with its own concepts, beliefs, images, system of politics, laws and social behaviour. The English Malay scholar Richard Olaf Winstedt has described the *Sejarah Melayu* as "the most famous, distinctive and best of all Malay literary works," while C.C. Brown, who has translated the *Sejarah Melayu* in 1952, has regarded it as "the finest literary work in Malay." The name of the author of the *Sejarah Melayu* is still unknown. Winstedt believed that the author of the *Sejarah Melayu* was a Malacca man of the court of Sultan Mahmud Shah (1488-1511). He wrote down the *Sejarah Melayu* up to the year 1535 and died sometime after 1535. His text came into the hands of Tun Bambang who copied it and added on to it more details and improved it as well. Winstedt has claimed that this text by Tun Bambang is the oldest text of the *Sejarah Melayu* in the world. The first translation of the *Sejarah Melayu* into English was made by Dr. John Leyden who worked for the English East India Company and served Thomas Stamford Raffles. His translation was published posthumously in 1821 and it was edited by Raffles who also wrote an introduction. There are now available 32 variant editions of the *Sejarah Melayu*, in various libraries throughout the world, each one different from the other. My primary sources for this article are the English translations of the *Sejarah Melayu* by Dr. John Leyden (1821) and C.C. Brown (1952).
2. Historically, Parameswara and Raja Secandar or Sultan Iskandar Shah are different names of the same person mentioned in different sources who founded Malacca in 1402 and ruled it till his death in 1414. Modern scholars agree that in *Sejarah Melayu* the Hindu names or titles of pre-Muslim rulers of Malacca were either suppressed or omitted or Islamicized or Muslemized to establish the first ruler's descent or legitimacy from Iskandar Zul-karnain—the hero of Muslim romances which preserved the memory of Alexander the Great's expedition to the Indus. As a consequence, "Parameswara" of the *Suma Oriental* of Tome Pires or "Pai-li-mi-su-la" (Permaisura) of the *Ming Shi-lu* or the Ming Imperial Annals has become 'Raja Iskandar Shah' (Leyden) or 'Sultan Iskandar Shah' (C.C. Brown) in the *Sejarah Melayu*. Hence, some prefer to give the name to the founder of Malacca as Sri Parameswara Iskandar Shah, or simply Sri Parameswara, while others call him Parameswara (Iskandar Shah). For more about the issue see: Wang Gungwu, 'The First Three Rulers of Malacca', *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (213), July 1968, pp. 11-22; Cheah Boon Kheng, "The Rise and Fall of the Great Melakan Empire: Moral Judgment in Tun Bambang's 'Sejarah Melayu'", *Journal of the Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 71, No. 2 (275), 1998, p. 109.

3. The most important change that the coup had brought was that since then the Malacca kingdom became known as the Malacca Sultanate.
4. According to Dr. John Leyden, Raja Ibrahim took the title of Abu Shahid on his ascension to the throne (*op., cit.*, p. 112).
5. Of them, three factors were very important. They were (1) the continuation of Hinduism in Malacca despite the fact that the majority of the Malacca subjects were by then Muslims, (2) the tyranny of the raja of Rokan (the guardian of Raja Ibrahim), and (3) the rivalry between Malay and non-Malay Tamils (since the Malays supported Raja Ibrahim while the Tamils led by Tun Ali supported Raja Kasim).
6. Firstly, the coup put an end to the tyranny of the raja (prince) of Rokan who was the guardian of his nephew and the minor ruler of Malacca—Raja Ibrahim. Secondly, it brought Raja Kasim, half-brother of Raja Ibrahim to power, who styled himself Sultan Muzaffar Shah and began to rule the Malacca Sultanate. Thirdly, Tamil influence increased in the Malacca court and as a result the Sultanate witnessed a perilous power struggle between Tamil Tun Ali and Malay Tun Perak. Fourthly, Islam was declared state religion of the Malacca Sultanate and a Muslim dynasty was firmly established. Fifthly, the Malacca Sultanate changed its foreign policy from a peaceful and passive to aggressive and expansionist policy and as a result a new era ushered in the Sultanate.
7. Paduca is an affectionate epithet that means beloved or dear. The Malay Paduca is a royal and princely title, like ‘Your Majesty’ or ‘Your Highness’. Tome Pires, *The Suma Oriental*, Vol. II, Council of The Hakluyt Society, 1944, London, p. 244. See also: R. J. Wilkinson, *op., cit.*, p. 36; Dr. John Leyden, *op., cit.*, p. 126.
8. However, it was Tun Kudu who would have to make the ultimate sacrifice to put an end to the political impasse that had gripped the Malacca Sultanate for more than a decade. Sultan Muzaffar Shah divorced her as a result, only to remarry Tun Ali, the political rival of her brother Tun Perak.
9. C. C. Brown’s translation of the *Sejarah Melayu* however, states that Tun Ali was made Treasurer thus he became pengulu bendahari or treasurer once more. See also: P. E. de Josselin de Jong, ‘Who’s Who in the Malay Annals’, *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (194), 1961, p. 32.

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