



Islamisation of the Middle Kingdom of Indera Ponik from the Reign of the First Raja Tengah to the Legendary Datuk Haji Ibrahim of Pulau Lakei

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Abstract

The Islamisation of Indera Ponik in the island of Borneo during the Majapahit Period has been linked to the first Raja Tengah in the 15th century based on an oral history transcript. Indera Ponik, the Middle Kingdom between the Kingdom of Tanjung Pura and Kingdom of Barunah (Brunei) was changed to Indera Samudera Ponik after conversion to an Islamic kingdom. The genealogy of Pangiran Indrana Rajian, the last Indianized king taking the name of Tuanku Sri Maharajian, the first Raja of Tengah to his grandson, Datuk Haji Ibrahim, was curated. The fall of the kingdom after three Sultans was attributed to the socioeconomic political conflict between the Kingdom and the Kingdom of Barunah. Datuk Haji Ibrahim was not being able to be coronated as the fourth Sultan as he did not possess the regalia for the inauguration. He retreated to Pulau Lakei at Bako National Park, Sarawak leading a solitude ending of his life. His decree was his family should not reveal of their status and the oath or *Napok* taken by his political allies and the local community due to the threat from Barunah. The *Napok*, the concept of hiding of this genealogy has attributed to the loss of a chapter of history. Today, Datuk Haji Ibrahim is remembered as a legend with strong physique and strong religious devotion who has Islamic spiritual power. His Mausoleum lies in Pulau Lakei.

Keywords: Islamisation, Indera Ponik, Indera Samudera Ponik, Kingdom of Tanjung Pura, Kingdom of Barunah, Raja Tengah, Datuk Haji Ibrahim, Pulau Lakei

1. Introduction

The narrative of Pulau Lakei is about a small island in the embrace of the South China Sea at the northern eastern tip of Bako National Park with mystic feature of interest of the existence of the Mausoleum and the Salamun Pond related to legendary Datuk Haji Ibrahim. As a tourist destination, Pulau Lakei is a unique park product that can attract tourist with promotions on recreation and recreational areas including beaches, highland or forests, the geology features and historical sites. The geology landscape fringes the coastline with rocks and huge shell-covered boulders. Pulau Lakei is recognised as one of the geological heritage sites within the Sarawak Delta Geopark.

2. Background

The local community's knowledge on the background of the legendary Datuk Haji Ibrahim is very limited. The oral literature that is inherited by the generations of the 60 – 70s age group passed down but not yet captured in written documents was very vague. The discovery of the grave of Datuk Haji Ibrahim was not recorded in written document. From the oral literature of the residents of the local community who are now in their sixties and seventies, maintained that they heard from their grandparents which could date it to more than 150 years ago. It was in 1987 – 1989 that the Mausoleum referred now as the Makam was constructed (Figure 1). The two upright stones known as the Batu Nesan, 3 feet apart: the headstone referred as *Rantau Kepala* and footstone, *Rantau Pinggang*. They are made of Belian, *Eusideroxylon zwageri* Tejasm and Binn of the families Lauraceae). The Belian is the most renowned timber species in Southeast Asia, particularly Borneo with the unqualified trade name "Belian", the Malay language definition for "jewel" or "priceless" attest to its status among the regional rainforest timbers. The durability of Belian as timber has been recorded to more than 150 years. There are signs of damage due to bushfire at least before 1987-89 construction of the Makam. Rotting of the wood has started to set in. The three layers of yellow cloth wrapped around the Batu Nesan is indicative of royalty. The Chinese community comes with burning joss sticks as seen around the grave asking for blessings especially when they ventured into the sea for fishing according to the local Malay community.



. Figure 1: Makam or grave of Datuk Haji Ibrahim with two upright stones known as the Batu Nesan, 3 feet apart: the headstone referred as Rantau Kepala and footstone, Rantau Pinggang

The narratives the legend of Datuk Haji Ibrahim can be read from the information board installed next to the Makam (Figure 2)



Figure 2: Narrative of Datuk Haji Ibrahim and Salamun Pond on the Information Board at the Makam installed by Sarawak Forestry Corporation

DATUK HAJI IBRAHIM MAUSOLEUM - *Datuk Haji Ibrahim "Mausoleum" has become a legendary monument at Lakei Island for more than three hundred years ago. The tombstones of the graves are made from hard tree trunk which still stand strong until today. This grave is looked after by the management of Bako National Park with great care. The late Datuk Haji Ibrahim's family origin is not really known by many. According to his life history, he is said to be a*



devoted Muslim who is kind and generous and like to help the poor. He is also known to be legendary strongman who is very brave and blessed with an extraordinary human physical strength, He is believed to be able to carry down a huge sailboat from a hill to the sea water alone without being assisted and later sailed to Mecca by himself. The engraved Arabic calligraphy found in the rock inside the Salamun Pool down this hill is believed to be written by Datuk Haji Ibrahim using only his bare hand.

SALAMUN POND - Salamun Pond is named by the late Datuk Haji Ibrahim and is said to be the “mother” to the seven ponds around here. The clear yellowish water flows from the upper reach of this Lakei Island and is thought to be clean and sacred and believed to be utilised for curing certain sickness or disease. In the olden days, during the Muslim month of Safar, many people will come here to collect the water. The engraved writing resembling an Arabic calligraphy “wapaq” written by Datuk Haji Ibrahim that is found on the bedrock inside this pond can still be seen clearly. The real meaning of that writing is still a mystery.

The bedrock with Arab calligraphy at the Salamun Pond is believed to an amulet or “Wapaq”



Figure 3: Engraved writing resembling an Arabic calligraphy “wapaq” written by Datuk Haji Ibrahim on the bedrock inside Salamun Pond

Another written document sourced from the Sarawak Forestry (www.sarawakforestry.com) is the tale:

TALE OF HAJI IBRAHIM - Pulau Lakei is known as Pulau Tok Rahman (Malay) and Pulau Tok Ahim (Chinese). Legend has it that Haji Ibrahim Abdul Rahman was a local of the area who lived around 300 years ago. He was believed to be a royal descendent from Sambas. His father was Abdullah Muhammad Al Hafiz. His mother was an Arab. He was said to be related to the Sultans from 52 Kesultanan Di Tengah (Middle Kingdom), Santubong. It is believed that he had



a brother named Muhammad Daud, who resided in Pulau Burung in Kampung Simunjan. Haji Ibrahim was drawn to worship of Allah, and so he withdrew to the island of Lakei for suluk, or seclusion from the world. There, he lived, drawing sustenance from land, sea and freshwater. It is believed that he had left series of inscriptions, said to have been carved into the rock by his very finger. Along with this piety he is also said to have blessed with tremendous strength. Mclaughlin et al. (2018) produced the transcription of oral history through interviews with the Tungkat Kerabat of Kampong Jaie, hereditary position whose responsibilities include maintaining the oral history from the early 900's until the present for the Middle Kingdom.

3. Research Questions

The research question formulated is “What is the relation between the Islamization of the Middle Kingdom, Indera Samudera Ponik and Datuk Haji Ibrahim?” .

4. Research Methodology

The research involved in collecting secondary data from the internet search engine, articles from Sarawak Gazettes and Sarawak Museum Journals. The eventual source was taken traced from the book of The Sarawak River Valley – Early Times – 1840 produced by Mclaughlin, Sahari and Morni (2018), largely from transcription of oral history through interviews with the Tungkat Kerabat of Kampong Jaie, hereditary position whose responsibilities include maintaining the oral history from the early 900's until the present for the Middle Kingdom. The primary data was collected from field activities and face-to-face interviews from the local community with permissions from the District Office of Kuching. Similar ethic approval to conduct the study was obtained from Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Sustainability, Sarawak.

5. Findings

Before the widespread adoption of Islam, most of Southeast Asia practiced animism, alongside Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism, with Hinduism and Buddhism being particularly influential in the region. The Kingdom of Indera Ponik known as the Middle Kingdom, between the Sultanate of Tanjung Pura and Sultanate of Barunah (Brunei) in Borneo, was changed to Indera Samudera Ponik after conversation to an Islamic kingdom. The genealogy of the First Raja Tengah after conversion to Islam to Datuk Haji Ibrahim was curated as shown in Figure 3. The historical events over the reign of the three rajas to Datuk Haji Ibrahim was briefly described.

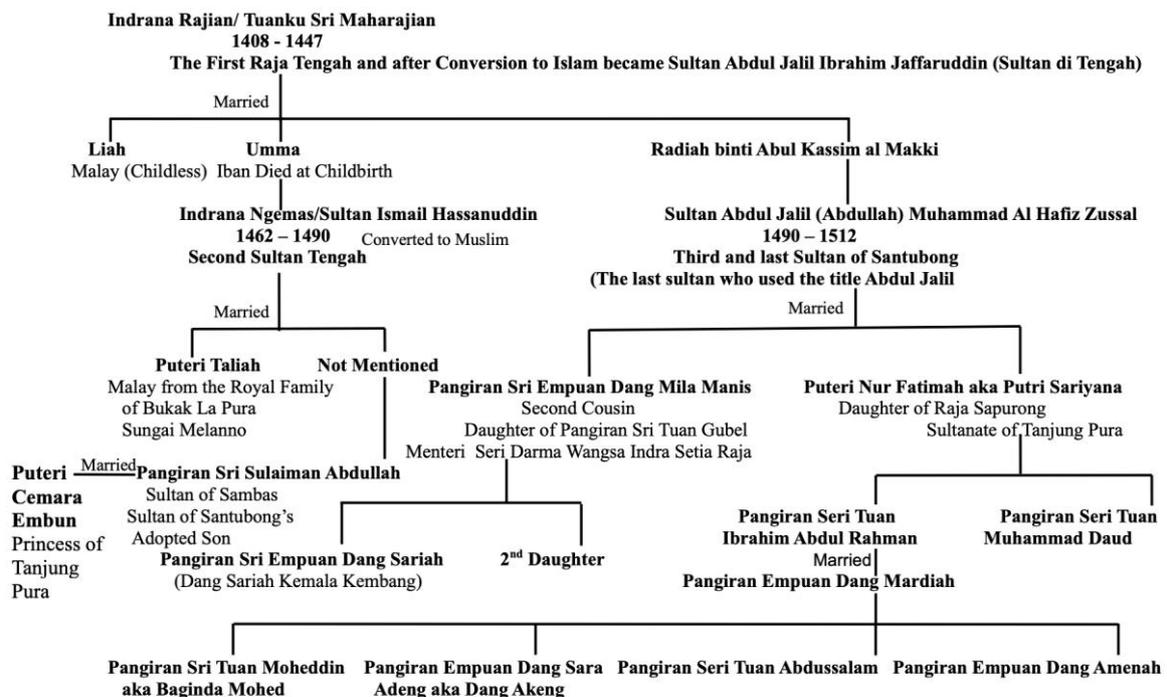


Figure 3: Genealogy of First Raja Tengah after Conversion to Islam to Datuk Haji Ibrahim



5.1 The Reign of Sultan Abdul Jalil Ibrahim Jaffaruddin (1408 – 1447)

Pangiran Indrana Rajian was the descendant of the first Malay ruler Indrana Jang Sorgi (925 – 974) from Srivijaya and Majapahit era in Indera Ponik. He took the name of Tuanku Sri Maharajian and become the first Raja of Tengah of Indera Ponik after conversion to Islam. His first wife, Liah a Malay, was childless. His second wife, Umma, an Iban lady from Sintang, near Sambas died after giving birth to Indrana Ngemas. During, his reign, the Raja met Maulana Ali Omar, a trader and preacher from Arabia while sailing to Ketapang (present day in West Kalimantan), where there was an Arab settlement. His intention was to invite the Arabs to trade with Indera Ponik. He learned Islam from Omar and embraced Islam. When his son, Pangiran Tuan Ngemas turned eight years old, Maharajian married Radiah binti Abul Kassim al Makki ("Al Makki" means from Mecca) the daughter of Omar. He became the first Sultan to become a Muslim in the Middle Kingdom, taking the name Sultan Abdul Jalil Ibrahim Jaffaruddin (Sultan di Tengah), also known as Akindra Tolen by the Iban.

Omar was invited to Indera Ponik to teach the Sultan more about Islam. Eventually all of the royals, the Ministers and the officers were converted to Islam. Indrana Ngemas, his eldest son had his name changed to Pangiran Ismail Hasanuddin. The Sultan also changed the name of his kingdom from Indera Ponik to Indera Samudera Ponik. Islam was spread to all the areas under him. When Radiah was with child, she requested to return to the holy city of Madinah, birthplace of Prophet Muhammad to deliver the baby. The Sultan wanted the future baby to become an Ulama if the child was a boy and to be named Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim Jaffaruddin. He decided to go to Madinah to see his wife and baby and at the same time to perform his Hajj on the month of 1 Ramadan 840 hijrah (9 March 1437). The Sultan mandated that his cousin, Pangiran Paduka Tuan Saenan who was a Menteri Indra Paduka Bantara diraja Mangkuk Bumi (acting Sultan) to rule the kingdom of Indera Punik in his absence. He also left a will to the Menteris and the officers stating that if he passed away during his journey, that Saenan would be the acting Sultan until his children were ready to rule as his eldest son Pangiran Paduka Tuan Ismail Hasanuddin was only 10 years old. The eldest son should become King and later, to be replaced by his second son Pangiran Paduka Tuan Abdullah Muhammad who was of two years old. However, the Sultan Abdul Jalil Jaffaruddin did not make it to Madinah as he felt sick and died on the way. Almarhum Sultan Abdul Jalil Jaffaruddin resting place was at the upper river of Vijayapura (Sambas river now) at Tanjong Pura known as Bijakyapura during his time. Pengiran Paduka Tuan Saenan ruled on behalf of the Sultan in the Kingdom of Indera Samudera Punik for 15 years (1447 - 1462).

5.2 The Reign of Sultan Ismail Hassanuddin (1462 - 1490)

When Pangiran Paduka Tuan Ismail Hassanuddin was 20 years old, he went with his uncle, Pangiran Paduka Tuan Saenan to Mecca to meet his brother Pangiran Sri Tuan Abdullah Muhammad who was 12 years old. When Ismail Hasanuddin became the ruler on 1 Rejab 855 till 29 Dzul Hijjah 884 (30 July 1451-52 March 1480), the Kingdom of Santubong was also known by traders as Kesultanan Kerajaan di Tengah or the Middle Kingdom between the two Kingdoms, the Kingdom of Tanjong Pura and Kingdom of Barunah (Brunei). Sultan Hasanuddin was instrumental in establishing a school to study religious teachings in Santubong at the foot of Mungguk Maras, established by Abdullah Muhammad as an order. The school became known as Darul Hannah. The Sultan was buried in the largest tombstone in Lidah Tanah.

5.3 The Reign of Sultan Abdul Jalil (Abdullah) Muhammad Al Hafiz Zussal (1490 – 1512)

Sultan Abdul Jalil Muhammad Al Hafiz Zussalam became the third and last Sultan of Santubong upon the retirement of his brother, Sultan Ismail Hassanuddin. He used the title Abdul Jalil after his late brother and father. Pangiran Sri Tuan Abdullah Muhammad could recite the Koran by the age of eight and learning Islamic Teachings from the Ulama (religious teachers) in Madinah as early as 10 years old following his father's wish for him to become an Ulama. He was also fluent in conversing Malay language. He was recognized as an Islamic preacher by the Ulama in Madinah. He studied until he was 27, when he returned to Ponik, after his mother died. His journey home included Pasay, Kedah and Melaka. Sultan Abdullah Muhammad had two wives. The first wife was his second cousin, Pangiran Sri Empuan Dang Mila Manis, the daughter of Pangiran Sri Tuan Gubel, the Menteri Ser i Darma Wangsa Indra Setia Raja. They had two daughters. Pangiran Sri Empuan Dang Sariah who was also known as Dang Sariah Kemala Kembang died and was buried Kampong Pasey Putih. The second daughter's name was not mentioned. Sultan Abdullah Muhammad was remarried to the daughter of Raja Sapurong named Puteri Nur Fatimah aka Putri Sariyana. They had two sons named Pangiran Seri Tuan Ibrahim Abdul Rahman and Pangiran Seri Tuan Muhammad Daud who were sent to Madinah when they were fifteen to learn Islamic teachings. The Sultan also adopted his nephew, Pangiran Sri Sulaiman Abdullah, the son of his brother, Sultan Ismail Hasanuddin when he was 11 years old after the death of his mother. Earlier he was adopted by his uncle Abdullah Muhammad Hafis, who was still a bachelor and studying in Mecca upon the death of Sultan Ismail Hassanuddin. Sulaiman was then sent to Mecca to study with his Uncle. Sulaiman was also referred to as Baginda Kulup (not



circumcised) because he was invincible since birth and even his hair could not be cut. He married Puteri Cemara Embun, the daughter of Sultan Jalaluddin Tanjung of Tanjung Pura. Later he became the Sultan Saifudin or Safiudin of Sambas to honour his grandfather, Jaffarudin. Sambas became a centre of Islamic thought. That also revealed the connection between Pangiran Seri Tuan Ibrahim Abdul Rahman and Sambas.

Sultan Abdullah Muhammad named all the martial arts that was the Betawi and Chinese Martial arts of Betawi traders and Chinese traders respectively, and combination that were mastered as "Pencak Kunto". The Sultan also had mastered the "Pencak Kunto". He built a training centre at Santubong where armies made up of Malays and Ibans were trained with it. Sultan Abdullah Muhammad also built an Islamic centre named Darul Hanna in Santubong before he became the Sultan, at the order of his brother, Sultan Hasanuddin. This centre, situated in Kampung Mungguk Maras at the foot of Bukit Maras where Batu Boyak is today, functioned as a place to train religious teachers. The presence of Islamic teachers in Barunah, suspected as spies caused tension in which the Sultan Barunah, (Sultan Bolkiah) felt that the government of Indera Samudera Punik wanted to invade Barunah. These clerics being close with the Awang/ dayang, descendants of Xsia Wang (Sultan Ahmad,) who was overthrown by the government of Barunah had taken refuge in Indera Samudera Ponik. Thus they were suspected as instigating groups of rebels against the Sultan of Barunah. In 1489, two Islamic teachers, Tuan Guru Baqi and his son Tuan Guru Halel were sentenced to death by the Sultan Bolkiah which upset Sultan Abdullah Muhammad. His demand for an apology in 1490 angered Sultan Bolkiah who even killed the messenger. Sultan Abdullah Muhammad intended to send an army to attack the Kingdom of Barunah (Brunei). It did not take place as forgiveness was granted with the condition that the traders from Indera Samudera Ponik were allowed to trade freely with Barunah (Brunei) without taxes and the Kingdom should recognize the sovereignty of Kingdom Indera Samudera Ponik. The terms and conditions were agreed upon with a feeling of dissatisfaction lingering on. Sultan Abdullah Muhammad was assassinated by Awang Balitar who had requested to temporarily dock at Santubong before they continued their journey to Riau Island. They were the Awang descendants living in Barunah (Brunei) on a mission to to kill the Sultan. Sultan Abdul Jalil Muhammad Hafizus Salam Ibn al Marhum Sultan Abdul Jalil Jaffaruddin (The third Sultan Tengah) died on a Tuesday during Saar prayer on 20 Jumadil Waal 918 hj 3 August 1512. The Sultan's body was brought back to be prepared according to Islamic custom and the culture of Indera Samudera Ponik and was buried at a special place near the Astana of Mungguk Maras near the foot of Mount Santubong close to a huge rock.

5.4 The Period of Pangiran Sri Tuanku Hj Ibrahim as Acting Sultan of Indera Samudera Ponik

Pangiran Sri Tuanku Hj Tuanku Ibrahim, at 30 years was already the acting Sultan of Indera Samudera Punik when Sultan Abdullah Muhammad was sailing to raise an army to help the Sultan of Malacca to defeat the Malacca invaders and the coming of the Portuguese. He was married to Pangiran Empuan Dang Mardiah, the daughter of Pengiran Sri Tuan Abdul Hamid. They had two sons and two daughters. Pangiran Sri Tuan Moheddin aka Baginda Mohed, Pangiran Empuan Dang Sara Adeng aka Dang Akeng, Pangiran Seri Tuan Abdussalam and Pangiran Empuan Dang Amenah. After the death Sultan Abdullah Muhammad, Tuanku Ibrahim became the acting Sultan of Indera Punik, to be inaugurated as Sultan 15 days after the burial of Sultan Abdullah Muhammad. As the regalia was moved from Santubong, it was not available for the inauguration. However, during his reign as acting Sultan, there were many conflicts between Kingdom of Santubong and Kingdom of Barunah. Sultan Bolkiah wanted to destroy Indera Samudera. In anticipation of an attack, the royal family and household, ministers, old folks, women and children were to move out of Santubong to safe places. Assets and property of the Kingdom of Indera Samudera Punik unable to be carried with them were hidden by burying them in several places only known to Pangiran Sri Tuanku Ibrahim and Menteri Indera Paduka Bentara di Raja Mangkuk Bumi on Santubong Mountain after the transfer of his people. A preparation of place for Pangiran Sri Tuanku Ibrahim to hide.

The Battle of Santubong

The massive surprise attack on Santubong took place on the 11th day during dawn till dusk on the 2 of Jamadil Akhair 918 hj 15 August 1512. It only stopped at Maghrib (around seven p.m.) by the army of Barunah. The wounded soldiers of Santubong were brought to the yard of the Astana at Mungguk Maras. During the five days' battle, the army retreated with Pangiran Sri Tuan Ibrahim injured and the palace destroyed and the pillars thrown into the sea. The mausoleum Almarhum Sultan Abdul Jalil Muhammad was torn down and flattened and the tombstones pulled out. All the kampongs around the Astana were also destroyed. The battle ended with the arrival of Sultan of Barudah at Santubong who was enraged that Pangiran Sri Tuanku Ibrahim was neither captured nor killed. There were also no treasures in sight to seize. The main areas of Indera Samudra Ponik and the kampongs that Pangiran Sri Tuanku Ibrahim had passed by in his escape route to Kampong Jaie were ordered to be destroyed. Any trader was not allowed to dock at Santubong but to proceed to Barunah.



The Regaining of the Santubong

The planning of recapturing Santubong took place at Pulau Lakei at the pretext of being traders to avoid being recognised. Two days after the battle and the defeat of the army of Barunah, Pangiran Tuanku Hj Ibrahim ordered his followers to repair the Mausoleum of Almarhum Sultan Abdul Jalil Muhammad. Treasures in four of the nine places of the Kingdom of Indera Samudera Punik were transferred to the treasure to Pulau Lakei. He took one Jamalong and two keris namely Keris Lok Sembilan Lingkar Junjuran and Keris Junjuran Awan to symbolize the sovereignty of the kingdom. In the event that the army was unable to defend Santubong, they should flee splitting into 3 groups to 3 places in Sungey Buntak, Sungey Salak and Sungey Tabo through Sungey Santubong. A shelter was built in Pulau Lakei as it would be the refuge place of Pangiran Sri Tuanku Hj Ibrahim. His Ministers and warriors would also leave with Pangiran Sri Tuanku Hj Ibrahim to Pulau Lakei. His family members should hide their identity so they would not be recognized by the army of Barunah. They should live like regular people and not to reveal themselves for their own safety. All of the political allies, the local community and followers in Jaheyr swore to take care of the safety of his children undertaking *Napok* due to the threat from Barunah. The *Napok*, the concept of hiding of this genealogy has attributed to the loss of a chapter of history.

The Loss of Santubong the Second Time

The second attack occurred on the 26th day after regaining Santubong. The landing of the army of Barunah in five ships launched the attack after Asar (4 pm) until Maghrib (7 pm). The army of Santubong withdrew in 3 groups as planned. The army of Barudah found that the Bukit Maras was abandoned the next day. They offered to stop the attack if the army of Santubong surrendered Pangiran Sri Tuanku Hj Ibrahim. Their mission was to capture or kill him and all of his descendants and the royal families were to be killed. During this attack, he was injured again. To protect his family, he had to be hidden. Pangiran Sri Tuanku Ibrahim went hiding with some of his Ministers and followers in Pulau Lakei because the army of Barudah was not aware of the island. A hut was built for him on the hilltop. Then he asked all his companions to return to mainland but kept the company of four warriors who were the high-ranking warriors who have expertise in silat. Known by the people of Sarawak as Tuanku Brahimi "Orang Keramat" in Pulau Lakei, in isolation he was said to have vanished. His presence in Pulau Lakei is a legend still believed by the people of Sarawak.

9. Conclusion

The account of the Islamisation of the Middle Kingdom of Indera Ponik Sumatera was presented. The curation of the genealogy of the first Sultan di Tengah from a written document of an oral history has been able to reveal the Islamic influence of the historical site of Pulau Lakei. The background of the legendary Datuk Haji Ibrahim has been unravelled tracing his lineage to the royal family of the Middle Kingdom in Borneo in the 1400s. The fall of the kingdom after three Sultans was attributed to the socioeconomic political conflict between the Kingdom and the Sultanate of Barunah. Datuk Haji Ibrahim were not being able to be coronated as the fourth Sultan that led to his retreat to Pulau Lakei and a solitude ending of his life. His decree was his family should not reveal of their status and the oath taken by his political allies and the local community due to the threat from Sultanate of Barunah. The oath or *Napok* is hypothesised to attribute to the loss of a chapter of history. Today, he is remembered as a legend with strong physique and religious man who has Islamic spiritual power.

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