

# Historical Building: *Symbol of Harmonious Multicultural in ‘Venice from East’*

Syafruddin Yusuf, Alian, Aulia Novemy Dhita\*

Department of History Education, Universitas Sriwijaya, Palembang, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author Email: [aulianovemydhita@unsri.ac.id](mailto:aulianovemydhita@unsri.ac.id).

## ABSTRACT

Multiculturalism is formed through the ethnic diversity in an area, so is Palembang. Based on its history, various ethnic groups in Palembang have started from Kedatuan of Sriwijaya. This research used historical method there are heuristic, source criticism, interpretation and historiography. There are various ethnic groups in Palembang, namely Chinese, Indian Arabic and native Palembang. The existence of ethnic Chinese and Arabs were predicted as there was contact between Kedatuan of Sriwijaya and Sultanate of Palembang. Meanwhile, the native Palembang called *wong Palembang* were descendant of the Javanese who came to Palembang in the 16th century or even before the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The existence of various ethnic groups in Palembang shows a very harmonious relationship. Hardly had occurred ethnic conflicts in Palembang. This fact is reinforced by the existence of buildings that characterize certain ethnicities that have existed since the Sriwijaya Kedatuan. In addition to buildings of worship from various religions, there are buildings or areas that show certain ethnic characteristics such as Kampung Kapitan, Kampung Arab Al Munawar and Kampung Arab Assegaf. The existence of these buildings is a symbol of multicultural harmony in Palembang.

**Keywords:** History, Building, Multicultural, Harmony.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country having a composition of people from various tribes or ethnicities. There are 250 tribes in Indonesia which are spread from Nangroe Aceh Darussalam to Papua. From this diversity, the Javanese is known as the largest ethnic group with a population of 95.2 million or around 40.2% of the total population of Indonesia as a result of the 2010 Population Census (SP) [1]. Besides the Javanese, there are Sundanese and Malay tribes who have the largest population in Indonesia [2].

The existence of ethnic diversity in Indonesia has resulted in the pluralism and multiculturalism. Pluralism refers to the condition of a society consisting of various ethnicities, religions, origins, and cultural backgrounds regardless of the interactions between them. In contrast to pluralism, multiculturalism is a political concept, especially identity politics that is born from the belief that every citizen has the same position [3].

Furthermore, Kymlicka [4] explains about multiculturalism that is a recognition, respect and justice for ethnic minorities which both concerning the universal rights which are inherent in the rights of individuals and communities which are collective in expressing their culture. According to Fawaizul Umam [5] multiculturalism is a condition of someone who can accept (accept) and acknowledge (recognition) about

diversity and diversity. Multiculturalism goes beyond tolerance for diversity, because multiculturalism is present in the sincere self and in the actions of other parties who are different

Talking about pluralism, multiculturalism and multicultural are always related to culture. Koentjaraningrat said that culture consists of universal elements namely languages, technology, economic system, social organization, knowledge, religion and arts [6]. Culture as the result of human creativity, taste and initiative.

Multiculturalism was formed in a very long process through acculturation and assimilation. This process can be seen, for example, in Java, inter-ethnic relations are seen through the development of Islam. Some relics such as graves and places of worship show inter-ethnic relations. Besides, there are also other cultural products such as batik and traditional arts that show cross-culture. Likewise, among Hinduism, Confucianism, Java and Islam. They live in multiethnic harmony. There is no domination from each of these cultures apart from acculturation across cultures [6]. So is Palembang, the ethnic diversity is formed from various interactions among the ethnic groups either through acculturation or assimilation. According to Malthe Conrad Bruun [7], an adventurer and geographer from France described that the condition of the people and the city of Palembang at that time was inhabited by heterogeneous communities

consisting of Chinese, Siamese, Malay and Javanese citizens.

The ethnic acculturation in Palembang can be seen at the Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin Jayo Wikramo Mosque. The architecture of the Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin Jayo Wikramo Mosque is a blend of East and West, namely Chinese, European, Arabic and local. Above the pyramid of the mosque there are 13 simbur leaves or ornaments resembling goat horns that are curved and sharp, as many as 13 on each side. This structure resembles the roof of a temple and traditional Chinese buildings. In addition, there is also a foyer like classical architecture of Greece. This architectural style can be found in Indian buildings in the XVII-XX Century. In addition, Arabic architecture blends with local culture in the calligraphy found on the neck of the mustaka, windows, pulpit, mihrab and entrances.

Ethnic Chinese have interacted with Palembang since the Kedatuan Sriwijaya era. At that time, China, India and Arabia had made trade contacts by bartering for commodities from Sriwijaya, for example, exchanging them for porcelain, silk, gold, silver, etc. Inter-cultural interactions during the Sriwijaya era were also seen when Buddhist pilgrims learned Sanskrit in Palembang with a famous Buddhist teacher named Syakyakirti [8].

In contrast to the proponent of Kee-Long, M.A.P Meilink-Roelofsz in Mestika Zed [9] argues that China entered Palembang around the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. They became trading partners for the sultan and some took the role of "brokers" or intermediary traders to meet the demand for imported goods. The number of the Chinese people in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century was around 800 people and integrated into the local community causing them to convert to Islam or marry the "native" Palembang population. Moreover, it was explained by Mestika Zed that some Chinese women in the upper circle of the palace are of Chinese descent. Their profession as traders has live long before the Sultanate of Palembang. During this period, the roles of Chinese traders varied from traveling traders, traders of basic daily necessities to middlemen in the pepper and tin trading network.

The same case happened to Arabs who had established trade relations with Sriwijaya. Although indeed the trade contact between the Arabs and Palembang was more intense during the Palembang Sultanate. This may be related to the similarity of the two religions. According to Mestika Zed [10], there were around 500 people who settled in Palembang in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. From the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century, they began to outperform Chinese traders. They dominated the fabric and textile trade as well as ship ownership which continued into the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Arabs live in separate groups in separate settlements like the Europeans. Their similarity in the field of religion in addition to knowledge and skills in literacy

and Islamic tradition makes their position slightly different from that of the Chinese.

The people of Malacca and its surroundings as well as people who came from the east coast of Sumatra who had mingled with the Javanese and indigenous people at the time of the arrival of the Javanese, had inhabited Palembang. The population of Palembang is different from those who live in the hinterland who are considered to be native inhabitants [11]. Besides those areas, entering the period of independence, there was a flow of urbanization from Java, North Sumatra, Central Sumatra and from the hinterland of Palembang. As a trading and industrial city that was starting to grow, where oil refineries and rubber mills in the city which need employees and employees that causes migration to run rapidly [13].

A series of historical stories from Palembang, also known as 'Venice from East', is the basis for ethnic diversity in Palembang, namely Chinese, Arab and Indian who live side by side with *wong* Palembang. Multicultural society lives in harmony, which is also marked by symbols or signs in the form of certain ethnic buildings or settlements. What are the buildings and villages? Why did it become a measure of the harmony of multicultural life in Palembang?

## 2. METHOD

The method used in this research is a historical method there are heuristic, source criticism, interpretation and historiography. *First*, heuristic, the researcher looks for sources that are relevant to material related to the history of Palembang, starting from the Kedatuan of Sriwijaya period, the Sriwijaya Kingdom and The Palembang Sultanate. *Second*, is source criticism which serves to confirm the correctness of historical data and facts. *Third*, is interpreting historical data and facts obtained from sources and the fourth is historiography by reconstructing historical events based on previous stages and writing chronologically and using the concept of cause and effect.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Result

#### 3.1.1. Multiculturalism

J.S. Furnivall argues that a pluralistic society is a society consisting of two or more elements that live independently without mixing each other in a single political entity [13]. So that it can be explained that multiculturalism refers to the state of a society consisting of groups or ethnic groups with different cultures, but bound by a common, formal interest in an area. The statement, as described by Hefner, that Indonesia is a "classic locus" (the best place/reference) for the concept of a pluralistic society is not an exaggeration [14]. Likewise, what happened in Palembang, the ethnic diversity from the Kedatuan of

Sriwijaya periode to the Sultanate of Palembang and today, is decorated with various ethnicities who live side by side. Several figures who are considered to carry ethnic colors in Palembang, after Kedatuan of Sriwijaya namely Sang Sapurba and Parameswara [15]; Ki Gede Ing Suro, the founder of the Palembang Kingdom [16] and Ki Mas Hindi.

Parameswara was the son of the ruler of Palembang who at that time was still a vassal of the Singhasari Kingdom. He then embodied the leadership and desire of Palembang to become a sovereign region (no longer a royal government in Java). However, this attempt caused the Javanese rulers to attack Palembang. He then escaped himself to Tumasik (Singapore) and Sungai Muar. It was in this last place that he founded the Melaka Kingdom [17]. That is the reason, some people are well-known that Palembang is synonymous with Malay.

In 16<sup>th</sup> Century Palembang under leadership Ki Gede Ing Suro. He is a Javanese descent who fled to Palembang. Why Palembang? Because in the previous period, there had been a relationship between Palembang and Java. Palembang is the territory of the kingdom in Java. In 1675, Ki Mas Hindi was proclaimed Palembang as an independent region. This was the beginning of the Palembang Sultanate with the application of the Islamic government system. During this period, the Malay culture developed because the two were interrelated.

That's figures gave a Javanese Malay identity to Palembang which also influenced multiculturalism in Palembang. Not only that's figure, but also many factors, there are geographical of Palembang especially in Musi River (Batanghari Sembilan River), trading activities and colonial periode.

### 3.1.2. Religious Building

Palembang has various religious buildings as houses of worship for the people of Palembang. Several religious buildings are characteristic of certain periods. Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin Jayo Wikramo Mosque was built during the Sultanate of Palembang. In addition, there are Ki Marogan Mosque, Lawang Kidul Mosque, Suro Mosque and Cheng Ho Mosque.

At that time, the Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin Jayo Wikramo Mosque was the only Jami Mosque, which was a mosque for carrying out Friday prayers. That is why, Ki Merogan built the Ki Marogan Mosque and the Lawang Kidul Mosque. Furthermore, Cheng Ho Mosque, a mosque with Chinese and Arabic architectural styles.

Other places of worship are the Siloam Church and Ayam Church (Gereja Protestan di Indonesia bagian Barat/GPIB Immanuel). These two houses of worship have an interesting architectural style so that they become "markers" or have distinctive characteristics compared to other churches apart from their location in the estate complex during colonial rule in Palembang.

There is also the Candra Nadi Temple or Soei Goeat Kiong Temple, which is the oldest temple in Palembang. In addition, there is also a temple at Pulo Kemaro. Pulo Kemaro was the defense base for the Palembang Sultanate.

### 3.1.3. Ethnic Village (Kampung)

As an international city, Palembang has been visited by many ethnic groups from several parts of the world. From a socio-social perspective, in Palembang there are many communities, such as: Chinese, Arabs and Indians who live in groups. They set up separate settlement groups. Many ethnic kampoong along Musi Riverside, that indicates the increasing number of migrants who trade using the Musi River route. From here, finally, Palembang became a metropolitan [18] and multicultur city.

Palembang has three very famous village, namely Kampung Kapitan, Kampung Arab Al Munawar and Kampung Arab Assegaf. The existence of this village cannot be separated from the results of Palembang's interaction with the outside world. Located in the 7 Ulu area, on the Musi Riverside, Kampung Kapitan has five buildings. This area will be very crowded during Chinese New Year and Cap Go Meh celebrations.

Beside that, there are Kampung Arab Al Munawar dan Kampung Arab Assegaf. Kampung Arab Al Munawar is located in 13 Ulu area, on the Musi Riverside. Kampung Arab Al Munawar have unique architecture namely, a "land house", a "middle house", a "stone house", and a "stone twin house". Another kampung Arab is Kampung Arab Assegaf, is a little different from Kampung Al Munawar. Assegaf Village has a mix of local architecture and Dutch colonial architecture. In addition, the village of Assegaf Village has a clean water treatment plant which also functions as an ice factory.

## 3.1 Discussion

### 3.2.1. Ethnic diversity in Venice from East

Palembang is also called a waterfront (water city) where its position is topographically facing the water with large and small tributaries and the condition of the land surface which is dominated by swamps. The location of Palembang referred to *Venetie*, *Venetie Van Oost*, *de Oostersch Venetie*, *de Indisch Venetia* and *Venice of The East*, by Europeans. These various terms refer to one word, namely *Venetie* which is a water city in southern Italy. The use of this term seems to correspond to the topography of Palembang [13].

Geographically, Palembang is strategically located, resulting in the center of trade in Southeast Asia which creates international interactions with various regions and ethnicities such as Chinese, Indian and Arabic. This was confirmed by the opinion of Kee-Long [13] which explained that there had been trade contacts in the form

of bartering between China, India and Arabia with Sriwijaya. It was also strengthened by Muljana [19] regarding the ideal location of Sriwijaya for Javanese, Indian, Arabic and Chinese shipping traffic.

Besides trade contacts, inter-ethnic relations appeared in religious relations in Sriwijaya. As the center of Buddhism, Sriwijaya remains "open hearted" to other religions such as Hinduism and Islam. As in Bumi Ayu Temple, which is located in Bumiayu Village, Tanah Abang District, PALI Regency, South Sumatra, is a Hindu religious temple marked by the discovery of various Hindu religious statues such as the statues of Shiva Mahadeva, Agastya, Nandiswara and Mahakala [20].

Palembang's inter-ethnic relations continued during the Sultanate of Palembang (1675-1825). According to M.A.P Meilink-Roelofsz in Mestika Zed [11] in the 16th century, China became a trading partner of the Sultan to meet the demand for imported goods. The Palembang Sultanate also maintains a special relationship with Arabs. These privileges are obtained by the Arabs based more on religion and knowledge of religious literacy and Islamic traditions.

Besides in the interactions between ethnic groups from China, Arabs and Indians, interactions between ethnic groups also occur with Javanese. As expressed by Ida Liana Tanjung [21], the socio-cultural relationship between Palembang-Java was mainly due to the claim of the Palembang Sultans to their descendants from the Majapahit and Demak Kingdoms in Central Java.

This can be seen from the language used in Palembang, namely *bebaso* or subtle language or *anggon* language and everyday language. *Bebaso* was originally used in the palace environment, but later became the language used in every community of Palembang. Nowadays, it is very rarely used; the people of Palembang often use everyday language. For example, "*Nak kemano?*" which in Indonesian means "*Mau kemana?*". If we use *Bebaso* it becomes "*ayun kepundi?*".

Regarding the use of language in Palembang, even according to Jeroen Peteers in Ida Liana Tanjung [25], it shows a clear difference in the formality of status between the speakers spoken to. The relationship between Palembang and Java existed before Ki Mas Hindi proclaimed the Palembang Sultanate in 1675. It started when Ki Sedo Ing Lautan (1547-1552) moved to Old Palembang (1 Ilir) due to the political situation in the Demak Kingdom. Even before Ki Sedo Ing Lautan, Palembang's early history was synonymous with Ario Damar (Ario Dillah) and Raden Patah [16] from the Demak Kingdom.

The relationship between Palembang and Java is very special in shaping the identity of the Palembang people, namely the native Palembang or *Wong Palembang*. Based on historical data, it cannot be

denied that Palembang and Java had a long-standing relationship, even forming a large government such as the Palembang Sultanate. Regarding this identity, Djohan Hanafiah wrote a book entitled Malay-Javanese Cultural Image and History of Palembang.

From the above discussion, multiculturalism in Palembang cannot be separated from its history of Sriwijaya Unity and the Sultanate of Palembang. In addition, Palembang's geographic location as a local and international trade-shipping traffic is the evidence of trade contacts among Palembang and Java, China, Arabia and India. Some of the traded goods that are traded and traded through the barter system include daily necessities, pepper, tin to porcelain, silk, gold, silver, etc. Until now, multiculturalism is harmonious in Palembang. Hardly had occurred inter-ethnic conflicts. Even various ethnicities live side by side. Several buildings and ethnic settlements that have become symbols of multiculturalism in Palembang include houses of worship of various religions and Arab and Chinese villages.

### 3.2.2. Forms of Harmonization of Multicultural Life in Venice from East

Palembang is one of the multicultural cities in Indonesia. Its historical journey has brought Palembang to become one of the cities that has a variety of ethnicities, namely Chinese, Arabic and Indian, which live side by side in harmony with the native Palembang. Several buildings that indicate multiculturalism are houses of worship and certain ethnic villages.

Religion is a way of life that is believed by certain ethnic groups. In Palembang, there are various religions that live side by side. The harmony of religious life in Palembang is marked by building houses of worship for various religions, namely Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism. These houses of worship mark certain periods in Palembang history, namely the Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin Jayo Wikramo Mosque, Ki Marogan Mosque, Lawang Kidul Mosque, Suro Mosque, Cheng Ho Mosque, 'Ayam' Church, (Gereja Protestan di Indonesia bagian Barat/GPIB Immanuel), Kampung Kapitan, Kampung Arab Al Munawar and Kampung Arab Assegaf.

The Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin Jayo Wikramo Mosque was previously called the Sultan Mosque or the Agung Mosque. Laying the first stone in 1738 and its inauguration on Monday 28 Jumadil Awal 1151 H or 26 May 1748. Masjid Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin Jayo Wikramo was built by Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin I (1724-1758) without the new tower built by Sultan Ahmad Najamuddin (1758-1774), namely the son of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin I [22]. The function of the minarets in the mosque is as a place for *mua'zin* to announce the call to prayer as a sign for prayer time. The term minaret in the mosque is also called *ma'zanah* which means a place to make a call to prayer (Sholat) [23].

The Ki Merogan and Lawang Kidul mosques were built by Masagus Haji Abdul Hamid or called Ki Marogan. The construction of this mosque was motivated because at that time, the Sultan Mahmud Jayo Wikromo Mosque was the only Jami Mosque which meant that only the Sultan Mahmud Jayo Wikromo Mosque could be used as a place for Friday prayers in Palembang. Considering the increasing number of Muslim congregations, Ki Marogan built a mosque in 1871 in Kampung Karang Berahi or the mouth of the Ogan River, namely the Muara Ogan Mosque or what is called the Ki Marogan Mosque. This mosque can accommodate Muslim congregations from villages 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 Ulu and Karang Berahi village. In 1881 Ki Marogan rebuilt a mosque in the village of 5 Ilir (Lawang Kidul) which was later called the Ki Merogan Mosque. The architecture of these two mosques is almost the same as the Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin Jayo Wikromo Mosque [24].

Suro Mosque or Mahmudiyah Mosque, built by Ki Haji Abdurrahman Delamat on waqf land owned by Kiagus Haji Khotib Mahmud and was completed in 1889, is located on Jalan Kirangga Wira Sentika and Jalan Kigede Ing Suro, 30 Ilir Village. Furthermore, the Al Islam Muhammad Cheng Ho Sriwijaya mosque or known as the Cheng Ho Mosque, its establishment was initiated by the elders, advisors and administrators of the South Sumatra PITI (Persatuan Islam Tionghua Indonesia) along with Palembang Chinese citizens. The Cheng Ho Palembang Mosque is located at Amin Mulia Housing Complex, Jakabaring [25].

Besides the Islamic places of worship, there are also Christian houses of worship. Among them, the Gereformeerd Church is the first Protestant Christian church in Palembang which was built on August 13, 1939, located in the Talang Semut area. Initially, the church congregation was 144 people consisting of Dutch and Chinese. Furthermore, the number of congregations increased along with transmigration from Java. This church later changed its name to Siloam Church. The congregation calls this church the White Cruch because the entire church building is white [26]. There is also the Ayam Church (Gereja Protestan di Indonesia bagian Barat/GPIB Immanuel) which is also located in the Talang Semut area. The construction of this church was one of the policies of Gementee Palembang in 1906-1942 in Palembang.

Furthermore, the ethnic villages in Palembang as a form of multicultural harmony are Kapitan Village, Al Munawar Village and Asegaf Village. Kampung Kapitan is located in 7 Ulu. The name of Kampung Kapitan comes from the Chinese Kapitan, namely Tjoa Ham Hin. According to Syarofie [24] Kampung Kapitan was built around 1830, when the Palembang Sultanate was abolished by the Dutch. At that time, the Chinese population in Palembang was allowed to live on the mainland. Furthermore, Kampung Arab Al Munawar and Kampung Arab Assegaf located in Musi Riverside. In Kampung Arab Al Munawar, there

are seven houses from the 19th and 20th centuries. Kampung Arab Assegaf is noted to have the largest panglong business in Palembang and the first ice block producer in Palembang which was built in 1929 and is still operating today. The tribes that inhabit the villages in the Seberang Ulu area are Al Habsyi, Almunawar, Al Haddah and Alkaf. Both Kapitan, Al Munawar and Assegaf have architectural characteristics characterized by Indies houses built by Europeans in Indonesia.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Multiculturalism was formed from a very long process through acculturation and assimilation. Likewise, with multiculturalism in Palembang which began to take shape since the arrival of Javanese descendants in Palembang and was also supported by its very strategic location in trade shipping traffic since the Kedatuan of Sriwijaya. A series of historical stories of Palembang, also known as "Venice from East", is the basis for ethnic diversity in Palembang, namely Chinese, Arab and Indian who live side by side with the native Palembang people. The form of harmonization of multiculturalism in Palembang is marked by the existence of various buildings and villages that characterize multiculturalism in Palembang.

The form of harmonization of multiculturalism in Palembang is marked by the existence of various buildings and villages that characterize multiculturalism in Palembang. Houses of worship of various religions in Palembang have an important role in the concept of multiculturalism and in maintaining harmony between ethnicities in Palembang. Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin Jayo Wikromo Mosque, Suro Mosque, Ki Marogan Mosque, Lawang Kidul Mosque, Siloam Church, Ayam Church (Gereja Protestan di Indonesia bagian Barat/GPIB Immanuel), Candra Nadi Klenteng, Klenteng in Pulo Kemaro, Kampung Kapitan, Kampung Arab Al Munawar and Kampung Assegaf are symbols of the harmony of multiculturalism in Palembang.

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