



# The Origin of Plural Society in Jakarta

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**Abstract.** This paper attempts to narrate the glimpse history of the origin of plural society in Jakarta. Using library research, it will discuss the rise of Sunda and the growth of Batavia. During nineteen hundred years, Jakarta received a lot of foreigners. They were merchants, workers, adventurers, or political administrators. Sometimes, they lived with their sons there and did not go back to their home countries. From earlier century, Tarumanegara had cultivated some agrarian products and attracted Chinese merchants to come and trade. Similarly, Sunda could utilise the natural potential to invite Indian and Sumatranese merchants to come. However the geopolitics of Java during the 16th century was not stable but Sunda succeeded to establish friendly trade with the Portuguese. The Islamic domination forced the Sundanese to submit their sovereignty. Under the Islamic rule, Jayakarta could resemble the fame of Kalapa as the main port in West Java. The chief of Jayakarta used the free trade to gain huge profit from all commercial activities. He permitted the Dutch to establish their trading post, later known as Batavia. The Dutch in Batavia began to monopolise the Asian trade. They imported Chinese workers and forced Indonesian labours to serve the Dutch daily needs. The Dutch, through Batavia, had changed the social world of Jakarta. The Dutch left various races in Jakarta. Today, we still find some foreign villages in Jakarta, for instance, Arabian village of Pekojan or Chinese village of Pecinan. During the centuries, global interaction in Jakarta was not merely in peace but sometimes a powerful side forced the weakness by arms.

**Keywords:** Tarumanegara · Kalapa · Jayakarta · Batavia · Tugu · Social · History

## 1 Introduction

The idea of wawasan Nusantara or Indonesian perspective does not enough to explain Indonesian multiculturalism. Indonesian perspective is merely used to analyse Indonesia in a macro-scale study. Meanwhile, Indonesian society is dynamic and has many cultures. As a cultural route, spice route could be used as a coridor or zone to link a port to another port. In a port, merchants and adventurers do not merely trade but also interact each other. In this context, plural society emerge and share their culture. One of many ports could represent Indonesia is Jakarta. Jakarta hosted various merchants and foreigners for hundreds years. Following previous studies (Ganap, 2011; Niemeijer, 2005; Heuken, 2002; Mijarto, 2013; Burnet, 2012), this paper tries to revisit the origin of Jakarta's plural society from historical perspective.

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## 2 Methods

This study used library research to exploit Eurasian sources. Both European and local sources would contribute to the accounts of the plural society in Jakarta. Using historical hermeneutics, we could understand the specific intention of the related sources by understanding various perspectives on the sources. In addition, reading the author's world could allow us to understand the context of the related historical event. Therefore, we could elaborate our data in a proper context.

## 3 Results and Discussion

### 3.1 The Rise of Sunda and Luso-Sunda Alliance

Early inhabitant in the areas, later known as Jakarta, could be traced by observing earliest artifacts there. Pick-axe and metal goods were found in Jakarta and West Java. Those artifacts could direct into earliest inhabitant in Jakarta. The earliest inhabitant lived there was Austronesians. They became the ancestor of many local ethnics living in Jakarta and Java. Another artifact, Tugu Inscription from Tarumanegara period informed that Tarumanegara had owned established political bureaucracy and was located in the present Jakarta (Munandar, 2021). Tugu Inscription also informed that the inhabitant of Tarumanegara was asked to dig Candrabaga and Gomati River. Two rivers were dug to prevent the flood and irrigate the plantation. Tarumanegara was also active to trade and many foreigners visited Tarumanegara around the 5th century. Fa Hien, the Chinese adventurer, visited Tarumanegara and witnessed some port cities in Tarumanegara. We may conclude that the area of Jakarta and Sunda was populated by Hindus at least between the 5th and 7th centuries (Heuken, 2002, pp. 22–23).

The existence of Tarumanegara ended in around the 7th century. The new polity emerged and dominated West Java. Its kingdom was Sunda Kingdom. Sunda was a Hinduist kingdom in the western part of Java. Sunda had several ports of Banten, Pontang (Serang), Tangerang, Cigede, Kalapa (Jakarta), and Cimanuk. Sunda was well-known for its various commodities. They had better pepper than Cochin; the slaves from the Maldive Islands; the rice; the unlimited vegetables; the large quantities of meats, pigs, goats, sheep, and cows (Pires, 1944, I, p.166; Sedyawati & Djafar (Eds), 2021, p.250). These merchandise and foodstuffs had already attracted various merchants from India and Sumatra to visit from century to century.

In the late 15th century, Muslim merchant communities began to inhabit Java. The Sundanese harbour masters restricted the Muslim merchants to come to the Sundanese ports. The Sundanese might instruct this policy to decrease the Muslim appearance in West Java. As seen in Java, the Sundanese seemed afraid if they were converted to Islam (Sedyawati & Djafar (Eds), 2021, p.253). The King of Sunda was terrified. Besides, he might consider the influence of the strength of two neighbouring sultanates. There were also a lot of Javanese and Gujarati traders staying in Cimanuk (Heuken, 2002, p.61). Sri Baduga Maharaja of Sunda sent his prince to Malacca in 1512 and 1521. Prince Suruwisesa was instructed to negotiate for Portuguese protection. In return, the Sundanese would supply the pepper annually (Heuken, 2002, p.94).

In 1518, the Portuguese captain of Malacca sent Nuno Freyre to Sunda. Freyre was instructed to visit and make a survey to Sunda merely. For Freyre, Sunda had significant pepper, rice, slaves, and gold (Carta a el-rei Dom Manuel na qual se expõem a má administração que havia em Malaca e a necessidade de conservar esta terra, Malaca, 15 de Agosto de 1518, Published in AGTT, V, p.480; Smith, 1962, pp.61–2). In 1520, Jorge Coresma was sent to load the pepper and ask the Sundanese to give the land where the Portuguese could erect their fortress in West Java (Carta de Garcia Chainho a el-rei, Malaca, 31 de Agosto de 1521, Corpo Cronológico, Parte III, Maço 7, Doc.115; Smith, 1962, p.64; Heuken, 2002, p.94).

The reinforcement of the Luso-Sunda alliance forced Demak to take further expansion. Demak wanted to decrease the Portuguese influence in Java. Adipati Unus launched a siege to Malacca in 1521. The Javanese invasion certainly positioned Sunda in a dangerous situation. At the same time, Sri Baduga Mahara sent Prince Suruwisesa to seek Portuguese protection. The Portuguese welcomed the Sundanese and granted them protection. In return, the Sundanese should supply pepper annually. In 1522, Jorge de Albuquerque as Portuguese Captain of Malacca sent Henrique Leme to Sunda. On 21 August 1522, the Portuguese representative and Prince Suruwisesa and his men consisting of Tumenggung (A High Official), Sang Adipati (Provincial Chief), Bendahara (A Treasurer), and Shahbandar (Harbour-Master) made an arrangement and a peace and trade treaty. Sunda should barter the Portuguese protection with the pepper supply to Malacca and establish a Portuguese fortress in West Java (Heuken, 2002, pp.69–85). The Tumenggung was instructed to assist the Portuguese to build the defence and guided the Portuguese where the land was situated. The land was located in the mouth of the Ciliwung River. The Portuguese placed a padrão stone to declare that Kalapa was under The Portuguese Crown officially. The Portuguese also gained a thousand sacks of pepper as proof of peace and friendship (Capitulação de el-rei de Sunda para que se fizesse no seu porto uma fortaleza. Porto de Sunda, 21 de Agosto de 1522, Gavetas XV-8–2, Published in AGTT, IV, p.196). After the treaty was agreed, Henrique Leme returned to Malacca with an agreement letter between the Portuguese and Sundanese representatives (Couto. 1602. Decada Quarta De Asia, I, 13, fl.82; Capitulação de el-rei de Sunda para que se fizesse no seu porto uma fortaleza. Porto de Sunda, 21 de Agosto de 1522, Gavetas XV-8–2, Published in AGTT, IV, p.196).

### 3.2 The Origin of Cosmopolitan Batavia

The Luso-Sunda alliance heated the political upheavals of Java. Sultan Trenggana of Demak aggressively extended his possession to Java. Demak allied with Cirebon to capture Banten in 1526. In the same year, Fatahillah led the Demak-Cirebon forces to capture Kalapa. They succeeded to occupy Kalapa in November 1526 before Francisco de Sa came to Kelapa in December 1526. The Portuguese fleet was disallowed to anchor at Kalapa. The Portuguese sailed to Banten before returning to Malacca (Heuken, 2002, p.80 & p.94; Sedyawati & Djafar (Eds), 2021, p.253). Kalapa was re-named into Jayakarta. The powerful Islamic sultanates of Demak, Cirebon, and Banten determined West Java. Banten led the conquest of Sunda in 1579. Banten Sultanate was very powerful and controlled all main ports in West Java from the late of 16th and 17th centuries.

The hegemony of Banten in West Java was very short. The chief of Jayakarta, submitted to Banten, Prince Aria Rana manggala, permitted the Dutch to establish many stores in Jayakarta in 1619 (Niemeijer, 2005, p.14). The trading post was changed into the Dutch capital in Southeast Asia, Batavia. Batavia grew rapidly and became a cosmopolitan city. The Dutch attracted many merchants, workers, and armies to stay in Batavia. Today, we still witness the Arabic village of Pekojan and Chinese village of Pecinan as the living heritage of Jakarta's plural society (Mijarto, 2013, pp.210–241).

The Dutch also enslaved foreign slaves there. The slaves who were liberated, later known as *Mardijker*. Most of them were the descendant of the Dutch. They became the foundation of plural society in Batavia (Niemeijer, 2005, pp.32–37). The Portuguese descendants also moved from Malacca to Batavia in the early 17th century. They lived till today in Tugu Village in North Jakarta. The Portuguese-Eurasians started to inhabit Batavia after its foundation. The first group, Portuguese retired armies in India, came to Batavia to serve their Dutch master. The Dutch also imported the Portuguese-Eurasian slaves (or the local slaves who spoke Creole Portuguese). The last group came to Batavia after the fall of Malacca in 1641. The Dutch merely permitted them to inhabit the middle of swamp, outer of Batavia. The *Peranakan Portugis* (Portuguese-Eurasian descendant) formed the new ethnic and lived in Batavia. They have preserved their hybrid culture that we can find it at present. Using ethno-historical approach, we can identify their four hybrid identities. They formed Creole Portuguese as a means of communication and borrowed some Portuguese words in their language. They also have some Portuguese motifs in their cloth. Besides cooking the Portuguese dish, the Portuguese descendant composed some new dishes after adapting some Indonesian dishes with the local taste. For the material culture, they kept preserving Tugu Church, the house of Tugu Society, and the funeral place (Suratminto, et.al., 2017; Niemeijer, 2005).

However, the Dutch gained huge profit from lucrative Indonesian commerce, but the greediness led the Dutch into the bankruptcy in 1799. The Dutch colonial government took over Batavia and ruled its dependencies. The Dutch lost their colonies after Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles and his English armada invaded Java in 1811. English colonization was very short and surrendered Batavia back to the Dutch after the Dutch had their independence from France.

## 4 Conclusion

The long history of Jakarta was enough to explain the origin of Jakarta's plural society. It also utilise as present Jakarta's multiculturalism. Considering Jakarta hosted multicultural society, future studies could identify hybrid identities in Jakarta. We explore four cultural elements of language, cloth, culinary, and material culture. As a cosmopolitan city, Jakarta borrowed many loan-words. Ancient Sundanese language had been used from earlier century. However, Sunda Kingdom also used ancient Malay language as a global language in Sunda Kalapa and West Java. The West Javanese and people of present Jakarta borrowed some words from Malay, Arabic, Indian, Chinese, Portuguese, Dutch, and English. The culinary in Jakarta was also determined by global taste. Many typical dish in Pancoran Glodok strengthened this assumption. Chinese culinary affected many dishes there, for instance *mipán* rice flour, *soto tangkar*, dumpling, *ketupat cap gomeh*,

cakwe, tauco, chicken rice, Shanghai salad, and duck breast. If soto tangkar came from Indian culinary, so Madurese satay represented Indonesian taste. Finally, we could also explore various material culture in Jakarta from mosque and Islamic tombstones to colonial buildings.

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