




The Traces of Multiculturalism in Islamic Tombs in Palembang

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Abstract. The ancient tombs in Palembang date back to the kingdom and Sultanate of Palembang. These graves have tombs and headstones of various types and decorations. Based on the types of tombstones and decorations, ethnic and cultural diversity can be identified, indicating traces of multiculturalism during the period of Islamic influence in Palembang. The purpose of this study was to determine the ethnic and cultural origins based on the Islamic tombs in Palembang. The research uses qualitative methods with a cultural anthropological approach. The results showed that in Palembang there are 4 ethnic groups from Java, Aceh, China and Arabic. The four ethnicities were identified from the shape of the headstones and the decorations on their graves.

Keywords: traces · multiculturalism · Islamic tomb · Palembang

1 Introduction

The diversity of ethnic groups and cultures in Indonesia has been collected by the Dutch since 1860 [1]. Plural societies retrieved ethnic boundaries based on prejudice which results in primordial social stratification that is subjective and can lead to the formation of social stigma of one tribe over another [2, 3]. One of the regions in Indonesia with diverse ethnicities is Palembang. Palembang in historical records is known as the place where inscriptions from the Sriwijaya period were found. One of the inscriptions that implies the existence of various ethnic groups is the Telaga Batu inscription [4]. Historical sources and archaeological data reveal the presence of foreign ethnicities, namely Arabs, Persia, Indians and Chinese [5]. In later times, piagem and manuscripts from the Palembang Sultanate period as well as oral histories in South Sumatra also illustrate ethnic and cultural diversity [6–10]. The overview of multi-ethnicity and culture in Palembang was also described by Sevenhoven [11]) in his book entitled “Painting the Capital of Palembang”.

Multiculturalism in the perspective of culture and anthropology has been studied in relation to its concept and understanding globally, as well as its application in Indonesia [3, 12, 13]. An archaeological study of multiculturalism was conducted by Simanjuntak in 2006 [14] to find out its roots in prehistoric times in Indonesia. An archaeological data from the prehistoric period to the Islamic period related to multiculturalism in Indonesia

were identified and integrated into the development of Indonesia through the practice of the five points of Pancasila [15, 16]. A number of these studies, there is no study of multiculturalism based on archaeological data from the Islamic period, especially in Palembang. Therefore, the research aims to find out the traces of multiculturalism in Islamic tombs in Palembang and their ethnicities. The results of this research are expected to provide an overview of the ethnic-cultural diversity of Palembang society during the Palembang Sultanate based on archaeological data, especially tombs.

2 Basic of Idea

Palembang's historical sources mention the existence of Islamic rule since 1549 [10, 17]. Before that time, Palembang was influenced by Hindu-Buddhist religion. The period of Hindu-Buddhist influence lasted from the 7th-14th centuries under the rule of the Srivijaya Kingdom [18, 19]. After that, Palembang was under the influence of Majapahit power until the 14th century [5, 20]. Thus, Palembang was under Hindu-Buddhist influence for 9 centuries, as shown in the form of archaeological remains found in Palembang. The Hindu-Buddhist influence over a long period of time continued during the Islamic period, because the Islamic-style kingdom in Palembang in various manuscripts and Palembang stories are always associated with the presence of Ki Gede Ing Suro from Java. Before that time, Palembang was also under Majapahit rule [5, 17]). Evidence of Majapahit rule can be seen in the architecture of the tomb batur at the Gedingsuro Site and Majapahit-style Hindu statues [18]. Majapahit as the last Hindu state has given birth to an Islamic culture in the form of tombs in Tralaya. The typology of Tralaya's tombstones becomes a cultural identity that distinguishes it from other Hindu or Buddhist cultures.

3 Research Method

Research on traces of multiculturalism in Islamic tombs includes data collection, processing, and analysis. The data collection process was carried out using primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through field surveys at Islamic grave sites in Palembang. Secondary data was obtained through relevant literature and reports of similar research at other sites.

The field surveys were conducted by identifying the typology of gravestones and tomb, their decoration and placement. Stylistic analysis was conducted on the form and decoration of tomb and gravestones. After that, an analogy was made with the form of decoration from similar periods from the pre-Islamic period, both in Palembang and other regions in Java. Referring to the results of this analogy, it can be seen whether or not there are cultural elements from the pre-Islamic period in the tomb, gravestones and decoration of Islamic tombs in Palembang. The identification results were correlated with secondary data to determine the ethnicity and region of origin. Knowledge of culture, ethnicity and origin can be used as a basis to illustrate the existence of traces of multiculturalism in Islamic tombs in Palembang.

4 Result and Discussion

The Islamic tombs in Palembang date from the period between the 16th-19th centuries AD, most of which are the tombs of the rulers and their families. The tombs are those of Gedingsuro, Panembahan, Sabokingking, Cinde Walang, Sultan Mansyur, Sultan Agung, Kawah Tekurep, Talangkerangga, Kambangkonci, Gubah Duku, Pangeran Syarif Ali and Panembahan Hamim. From a number of tombs found in Palembang, it can be seen that there are 5 types of tomb tomb, 4 types of tomb headstones and more than 15 forms of decoration [4, 18, 19].

The five forms of the tomb are the temple batur profile or yoni made of unglan wood (Fig. 1 and 15); the punden-staircase-shaped tomb made of brick (Fig. 2); the punden-shaped tomb made of brick (Fig. 3); the flat rectangular monolith tomb with a hexagon hole at the top placed on top of the brick punden and the rectangular monolith tomb with a hexagon hole at the top placed directly on the ground.



Fig. 1. The shape of the tomb's like the base of the temple or yoni at Sabokingking (source: personal document)



Fig. 2. The monolith tomb on the brickwork (source: personal document)



Fig. 3. Gravestones on a brick structure (source: personal document)

The shape of tombstones in Palembang can be categorized into five types, namely Tralaya, Demak, Aceh, Yemen, and local types. The characteristics of the Tralaya-type headstone are that the two sides are in the form of curly brackets and the top is pointed. The shoulders of the body do not protrude, but are decorated with sculptures that give the impression that the shoulders are protruding. The shape of the decoration is made more pointed in the center above the foot of the headstone. The decoration on the tombstone body is in the form of curved lines with a slight spiral style [18] (Fig. 4). The difference between the Tralaya-type headstone in Palembang and the tombstone at the Tralaya Site, Mojokerto Regency, East Java is the absence of the “Surya Majapahit” decorative motif. The Demak-type headstone is rectangular in shape and the top of the headstone is triangular. Both sides of the headstone are straight. The shoulders of the body are slightly flat. The body of the headstone is either plain and decorated with simple ornaments or highly decorated [18] (Fig. 5).

There are three subtypes of Acehese gravestones, namely mace-shaped, rectangular and stemmed. The mace-shaped headstone has a rectangular foot, a round body resembling a mace, and a lotus flower with eight three-petaled petals at the top (Fig. 6). Meanwhile, one gravestone is in the shape of a long rectangle, with the right and left shoulders widening like ox horns and the top of the gravestone tapering like a jasmine flower bud. The center of the tombstone body is decorated with plant motifs [18] (Fig. 8).

Yemenite gravestones are rectangular in shape, with Arabic inscriptions inside. The inscription is bordered by two rectangular frames (Fig. 7). Local gravestones come in two forms: irregular rectangular gravestones, which curve outward on both sides. The top is triangular and the shoulder is jagged with a pointed top. The front and back of the headstone are decorated with floral motifs (Fig. 8). Another local gravestone is made from a monolith, without any shaping process (Fig. 9).

The decorative motifs are applied to the tomb and the grave. The shape of the motif consists of floral, geometric and animals. The ornament that can be used for the study of multiculturalism, namely the rhombus motif, Majapahit sun-burst, peonies, lotus, bottle gourd, paper roll, book, swastika, meander and Greek cross.



Fig. 4. The type of Tralaya gravestones tomb (source: personal document)



Fig. 5. The type of Demak gravestones tomb (source: personal document)



Fig. 6. The type of Aceh gravestones tomb (source: personal document)

The rhombus motif and antefix is found on the top of two graves inside the tomb cupola of Sultan Muhammad Bahauddin (Fig. 10, left). The grave in Fig. 10 on the right is decorated with antefix motifs or symbols in each corner of the upper part. The right and left sides of the tomb in the Sabokingking tomb complex are decorated with twists and vines.

The peonies (Fig. 11), books, paper scrolls, swords (Fig. 12), bottle gourd jugs (Fig. 13) and vines are found on the tomb and gravestone of the tomb of Panglima Abdurahman (Lim Kulai), inside the cupola of Pangeran Kamuk's tomb. Other ornamental motifs include poenix birds and butterflies.

Multiculturalism in national discourse is often interpreted differently from one country to another. The understanding of the term multiculturalism can be understood differently by many countries depending on the socio-political background that accompanies the emergence of this term [12, 21]. Multiculturalism is a situation where all different



Fig. 7. The type of Yaman gravestones tomb (Source: Archaeology Center of South Sumatra, 2005)



Fig. 8. The type of local gravestones tomb (Source: Archaeology Center of South Sumatra, 2020).

ethnic, cultural or racial groups in a community have equal rights and opportunities in the life of society and the state. Multiculturalism can also be interpreted as the response of a society or government to issues of cultural diversity in a society. Another definition of multiculturalism is the way a society deals with cultural diversity. A multicultural society is characterized by people of different races, ethnicities and nationalities living together in the same community. In a multicultural society, individuals can maintain, inherit, celebrate and share their cultural ways of life, language, traditions and behaviors that differ from one individual to another.

Traces of multiculturalism are identified from five types of tombstones, namely Tralaya, Demak, Aceh, Yemen and Local. Most of the five types of gravestones are of the Demak type. The existence of Demak culture can be traced to the history of the rulers



Fig. 9. The type of local gravestones tomb (Source: Archaeology Center of South Sumatra, 2020).



Fig. 10. Rhombus and cymbals decorative patterns on grave at Sabokingking tomb (Source: Archaeology Center of South Sumatra, 2020)



Fig. 11. The decorative variety of peony flowers (Source: Archaeology Center of South Sumatra, 2020).

of Palembang during the Islamic period who came from the north coast of Java. These immigrants were followers of Arya Penangsang who lost the war to Jaka Tingkir. In addition, the first Demak ruler was the son of Girindrawardhana Dyah Ranawijaya (the last king of Majapahit) with a Champa princess, who was born and raised in Palembang. This fact also has an impact on the presence of Majapahit cultural elements with an Islamic character in the Tralaya-type gravestones of the two tombs in Sabokingking and Kawah Tekurep. The Tralaya-type tomb in the Sabokingking Tomb Complex is believed to be the tomb of the wife of Prince Sideng Rajek, the last ruler of Palembang with a



Fig. 12. The decorative variety of sword (Source: Archaeology Center of South Sumatra, 2020).

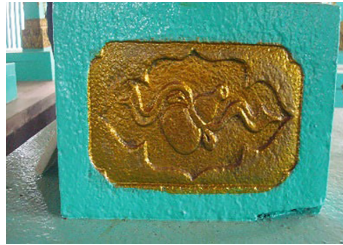


Fig. 13. The decorative variety of gourd bottle jugs (Source: Archaeology Center of South Sumatra, 2020).



Fig. 14. Bentuk nisan makam Imam Sheikh Abu Bakr bin Salem رحمه الله عليه في Tahrir, Yaman Selatan – (source: AtlasIslamica_files)

palace in Kutogawang. Prince Sideng Rajek fled to Inderalaya, as his palace was burnt down by the Dutch in 1659. The identity of the tomb with the Tralaya-type headstone at Kawah Tekurep is unknown. However, the placement of the tomb indicates that the buried figure was not a close relative of the ruling sultan.

The Yemeni-type gravestone is only found in the Gubah Duku tomb complex. The shape of this gravestone is similar to the gravestone in the tomb complex of Imam Sheikh Abu Bakr bin Salem رحمه الله عليه in Tahrir, South Yemen (Fig. 14). The presence of this gravestone is linked to the migration of the Hadrami people in the late 19th century.

The traces of multiculturalism during the Islamic period in Palembang can also be seen from the ornaments on the graves and tombstones. The double swastika, peony flowers, water gourd jug and library on the tomb of Commander Lim Ku Lai show



Fig. 15. Yoni of Candi 1, Bumiayu site, Regency of Pematang Abab Lematang Ilir, South Sumatera (source: Afrinaldi Zulhen)

the influence of Chinese decoration. Double swastika decoration is also found at the foot of the tombstones behind the dome of the tomb of sultan Mahmud Badaruddin Jayawikrama. The decorative butterflies and poenix birds on the tombstones in the Prince Syarif Ali Cemetery Complex also seem to have been influenced by China.

Historical sources describe the wives of the Palembang sultan and his sons-in-law who came from several regions in the archipelago, even coming from abroad. In addition, from historical sources it can also be seen that the ulama and teachers of the sultan all came from Arab ethnicity.

Referring to a number of archaeological and historical data, it can be seen that a multicultural society already existed during the Islamic period, even since the previous period (Hindu-Buddhist). This shows that multicultural society is a historical fact and the mixing of people from various ethnicities and regions can play a role in the unity of society. Multicultural society can be realized because of the understanding of the importance of nationhood by the people at that time. The understanding of the importance of nationhood already existed during the Palembang Sultanate as illustrated in the diversity of the forms of tomb, gravestones and decoration of Islamic tombs in Palembang.

5 Conclusion

Islamic tombs in Palembang show the accommodating attitude of the Palembang ruler, in this case the sultan, towards the diversity of society and culture. Accommodation to cultural diversity can be seen in the Hindu-Buddhist and Chinese ornaments. Based on the typology of tombstones, it is known that there are Javanese, Chinese and Arab ethnicities. The diversity of cultures and ethnicities shows that the ruler has realized multiculturalism in Palembang. Political recognition shows diversity as a cultural asset that must be recognized together and mutually enriching. In the current context, the statement of recognition of ethnic, racial, cultural, social and belief diversity (multiculturalism) needs to be put forward to avoid divisions between communities that have begun to emerge since the last decade. Pancasila, which is the substance of the cultural elements of all ethnic groups in Indonesia, must still be used as a protector of Indonesian multiculturalism.

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