

## Community Diversity And Religious Tolerance In The History Of The Kingdom Of Sriwijaya

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### Info Artikel

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### Abstrak

Kerajaan Sriwijaya pada masa keemasannya banyak dikunjungi oleh para pedagang asing (Arab, Tionghoa India) yang datang ke Sriwijaya untuk berdagang dan kepentingan lainnya, sehingga secara tidak langsung akan mempengaruhi keberagaman masyarakat serta mengarah pada kehidupan yang toleran di Sriwijaya. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis keberagaman masyarakat di Sriwijaya dalam berbagai aspek kehidupan, toleransi antar umat beragama seperti Budha, Islam dan Hindu, serta faktor-faktor yang muncul dalam kehidupan toleransi di Sriwijaya. Metode yang digunakan adalah metode sejarah atau metode sejarah. Langkah-langkah dalam metode sejarah meliputi heuristik (pengumpulan / sumber data), verifikasi (pemilihan atau kritik sumber), interpretasi (interpretasi sejarah) dan terakhir historiografi (penulisan sejarah). Penelitian ini menjelaskan tentang kondisi keberagaman masyarakat Sriwijaya, mulai dari suku asli, Arab, India dan Tionghoa, para orang asing tersebut berada di Sriwijaya karena faktor ekonomi yang mereka masuki dalam berdagang. Keberagaman masyarakat di Sriwijaya sangat dilindungi oleh raja Sriwijaya, tidak ada penekanan terkait hal ini.

### Abstract

*The Sriwijaya Kingdom in its golden age was visited by many foreign traders (Arab, Indian Chinese) who came to Sriwijaya for trade and other interests, so that it would indirectly affect the diversity of society as well as lead to a tolerant life in Sriwijaya. The purpose of this study is to analyze the diversity of people in Sriwijaya in various aspects of life, tolerance between religious communities such as Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism, and the factors that emerge in the life of tolerance in Sriwijaya. The method used is the historical method or historical method. The steps in the historical method include heuristics (data collection / sources), verification (selection or source criticism), interpretation (historical interpretation) and finally historiography (writing history). This research explains the condition of the diversity of the Sriwijaya community, starting from the indigenous people, Arabs, Indians and Chinese, these foreigners are in Sriwijaya because of the economic factors they enter into trading. The diversity of people in Sriwijaya was very much protected by the king of Sriwijaya, there was no emphasis*

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## BACKGROUND

Sriwijaya is known as the largest maritime empire in the archipelago which is visited by many foreign traders from Arabia, India and China. Sriwijaya is also known as one of the centers of Buddhist learning and teaching Sanskrit in Southeast Asia (Sholeh 2015, 50). That is why Sriwijaya was visited by many monks from outside, thus it is not impossible that in the center of Sriwijaya there are community groups whose religions are other than Buddhism, namely Islam, Hinduism, and other local beliefs. For the study of religious life in Sriwijaya, the data used as references are inscriptions, relics of statues, relics in the form of temples in Bumiayu, foreign news (Chinese and Arabic), and archaeological data which until now many recent evidences have been found. The existence of Mahayana Buddhism can be seen from the contents of the Talang Tuo inscription (March 23, 684 AD) besides explaining also about the construction of a garden, which shows prayers and hopes for the salvation of all creatures (Coedes 1989, 56-61). Helping the salvation of all beings is the main goal of someone who has reached the Buddha level. A Bodhisattva has a moral duty to help his fellow beings and other beings to be free from reincarnation.

The greatest center of Buddhist teaching at that time was Nalanda. Several Chinese sources also mention that Sriwijaya is also a busy center for learning Buddhism, this information is supported by Chinese notes that I-Tsing explained when visiting Sriwijaya there were more than 1000 monks studying Buddhism in Sriwijaya (Sriwijaya Kedatuan Civilization House Team 2017, 33). Until the early 11th century AD, Kadatuan Śriwijaya was still the center of Buddhist teaching. Religious activities in the community in the atuanriwijaya Kadatuan area are not only Mahayana Buddhism, other religions also have the opportunity to develop. Archaeological evidence in the form of stone statues representing Hinduism and Tantrism, was also found in the Śriwijaya Kadatuan area. At Palembang, Besides being found Buddha statues, Hindu statues were also found in the form of Ganeśa statues (9th century AD) and Shiva statues (Siregar 2010, 34).

This proves that in the city of Sriwijaya there are also groups of people who embrace Hinduism who live among the Buddhist community groups.

An interesting statue to observe is the Bodhisattva Awalokiteśwara statue made of stone. On the back of the statue, there is a short inscription, which informs about a Hindu priest who presented a Bodhisattva statue, which is of course for the Mahayana Buddhist community (Utomo 2018, 22). From this evidence, it can be interpreted that there is harmony in religious life among the majority Buddhist community groups and Hindu community groups who are classified as minorities. At the Bumiayu temple, there are also relics of statues that are Hindu in style so that this evidence adds to the strength of diversity in the Sriwijaya earth regarding religious tolerance.

Islam entered Palembang in the 7th century AD by being brought directly by Muslim traders from Arabia. Evidence of the existence of Islam in the center of the Sriwijaya kingdom was obtained from Arabic news which explained that the king of Sriwijaya had sent a messenger to the Caliph Umar ibn 'Abd. Al-Aziz (717-720 AD) during the Umayyad dynasty. The contents of the letter explained about the giving of gifts from Sriwijaya as a sign of friendship and at the same time a request to request that a mubaleq be sent from the Umayyah dynasty as one of the advisors to the king in Sriwijaya (Azra 1995, 41-42). The news from Arabic further strengthens the development and conditions in the center of the Sriwijaya kingdom not only for Buddhism, but for peaceful coexistence, upholding tolerance with other religions such as Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism.

Looking at the historical evidence described above, at least it proves that the king of Sriwijaya has high tolerance and respect for a diversity of society despite the differences in religious communities. A very valuable lesson for present and future young generations about a tolerant life in the diversity of society in the past such as the Sriwijaya era. The purpose of this research is to analyze the diversity of people in Sriwijaya in various aspects of life, to analyze the inter-religious tolerance in Sriwijaya between Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism, and the factors

of the emergence of a life of tolerance among religious people in various fields in Sriwijaya.

## METHODS

This research was carried out in sites of Sriwijaya kingdom heritage such as the Bumiayu temple in Pali Regency and the surrounding sites of the Sriwijaya kingdom of Palembang. This research uses historical (historical) methods. The historical method is the process of critically examining and analyzing past records and relics, in other words the historical research method is an instrument for reconstructing historical events into history as stories (Gottschalk 2008,32). This research also uses many approaches from various scientific fields (multi aproach), namely theological, sociological, economological and politicological approaches.

The historical method steps in this study include:

- 1) Source Collection (Heuristics) Heuristics is a technique in historical research to find and collect historical sources, such as field sources from documentation, observation and interviews. Apart from collecting field data, library research was also carried out, such as journals, archaeological research reports, and other relevant books.
- 2) Source Verification. Verification, also known as source criticism, is to obtain the validity of sources that are truly valid. In this case, source criticism is divided into two, namely external criticism and internal criticism (Daliman 2015, 64). In this second stage, the writer verifies the collected sources with the aim of obtaining reliable and accountable sources. Sources obtained from the field and from books are selected according to sources that are truly reliable.
- 3) Interpretation (Interpretation of History) To analyze data that has been collected from various sources and has been verified, this third activity the writer performs the interpretation or also

known as the data analysis stage (historical interpretation). Historical interpretation or interpretation is often referred to as historical analysis or interpretation. At this stage the researcher synthesizes a number of facts and data obtained from historical sources about the socio-cultural life of the Srivijaya people and together with the theories, these facts are compiled into a comprehensive interpretation. Researchers will make comparisons with these data and perform a series of abstracts to form a good writing structure.

- 4) Historiography. As the last stage in the historical method is historiography, historiography is a way of writing, compiling or reporting the results of historical research that has been carried out (Abdurrahman 1999, 67). In the last stage of this research, the researcher wrote a history with the aim that the written results can provide a clear picture of the research process from beginning to end. Based on this writing, it will be able to be assessed whether the research took place in accordance with the procedures used or not, has sufficient validity and reliability or not, so that the writing of history will be able to determine the quality of historical research itself.

## DISCUSSION

### Community Diversity in Sriwijaya

Archipelago trade relations with foreign countries, especially with India, China and Arabia are very easy to happen. This condition is due to geographic factors that are favorable for the archipelago itself, namely the existence of good monsoons for sailing across the Indian Ocean to the East and vice versa (Notosusanto 2008, 5). Such conditions clearly make Srivijaya China), different from the conditions during the 7th century AD, according to Obdyen the geographical conditions of the line of islands from Malacca to Bangka, there are a series of Riau-

Lingga islands and small islands to the Bangka Strait which are still united in these islands. (Daldjoeni 1984, 43).

Such geographic conditions were very favorable for Sriwijaya, so traders from Arabia, India and China would automatically stop by at the center of Sriwijaya every time they went through this route. Archaeological evidence regarding the old settlements that existed in the center of Sriwijaya was found mostly on the banks to become geographically profitable areas. Like it or not, foreign traders will go through the Sriwijaya trade route or stop by at least in the center of Sriwijaya before continuing their journey. This opinion is supported by Bernad, that the archipelago is visited by many foreign traders due to geographical factors, such conditions make Sriwijaya busy with foreign traders (Vlakke 2008, 8). The Sriwijaya period trade shipping route, especially the route through the Malacca Strait to the Bangka Strait, was very strategic at that time, the conditions at that time and the present conditions had undergone significant changes. As in the Malacca Strait that leads to the Bangka Strait, in the current conditions, many of the islands have sunk so that traders by sea can go directly to the North (a large river sea which is thought to have been an ancient coastal area. Archaeologists found that the remains of ancient house pillars buried in the ground on the banks of old rivers were made of nibung wood or ulen wood (iron wood) found at Air Suguhan and the Margomulyo site (Wiyana 2014, 83).

### **The Life of Religious Tolerance in the Sriwijaya Kingdom**

Sriwijaya trade shipping relations with Muslim (Arab) traders have been going on for a long time. The Arabic name is often told by the Chinese as Ta-shih or Ta-shih K'uo which is usually also called Arabic (Wolters 2011, 227). The shipping and trade relations between the Arabs and Sriwijaya were accompanied by friendly and trade relations (Gadjahnata 1984, 30). Around 628 AD, there was a companion of the prophet Muhammad SAW. named Akasyah bin Muhsin al-Usdi entered the archipelago to

deliver da'wah by bringing a letter from the prophet Muhammad SAW. to the rulers in the archipelago (Husni 2006, 19). The envoy explained that he wanted to deliver Islamic da'wah to the early ruler of the Sriwijaya kingdom (Kan-to-li), and received a good reception by the ruler. One of the reasons, according to Kan-to-li rulers, was that Islam was the teaching of monotheism, which was similar to the beliefs held by Kan-to-li aristocrats. The belief in monotheism in Kan-to-li is known as the Braham teachings (monotheime teachings from the prophet Abraham) (Sirzani 2011,24-27).

Sri Indrawarman or Sri Maharaja Indrawarmadewa was a Sriwijaya maharaja. In Chinese records, he is known as Shih-li-t'o-pa-mo (Jayanegara 2009, 69). The clue about the existence of this king only comes from a letter written on his decree which was addressed to the Arab rulers of the time Umar bin Abdul Aziz (717-719 AD, a caliph of the Bani Umayyah). It is stated in the letter dated 718 AD that the letter was sent from a Maharaja who had thousands of elephants, had spices and fragrances and camphor, with his city being traversed by two rivers to irrigate their agricultural land and deliver gifts to the caliph Umar (Azra 1995, 28-29). The sender in question was the king of Sriwijaya to the Umayyah dynasty during the reign of Umar bin Abdul Aziz.

While the second letter documented in the book written by Ibnu Abdul Rabbih (860-940 AD) entitled *Al Iqd al Farid* (Special Necklace), which contains a request from the king of Sriwijaya to the Umayyah dynasty to send mubaleq to Sriwijaya as an advisor to the king (Azra 1995, 28 ). In Sriwijaya itself, in the 7th century AD, there was already a group of Muslim traders living on the banks of large rivers or beaches with other traders such as China and India (Purwanti 2004, 111). In the area of the Bangka Strait itself, archaeologically, many artifacts of Arab merchant ships and goods were found which after laboratory tests were carried out on ship wood chips and other items estimated to be the 9th century AD The archaeologist Retno Purwanti also emphasized that Islam had entered the territory of the Sriwijaya era (Purwanti, 2015:

42). The entry of Islam in Sriwijaya was inseparable from the role of Arab traders who brought it.

## Closing

### a. Conclusion

The diversity of Srivijaya society was influenced by foreign traders (Arab, Indian, Chinese), who came to trade for an indefinite period of time, and they often settled semi-permanently in Sriwijaya. The diversity of the Sriwijaya community is not an obstacle, in fact this diversity makes the king of Sriwijaya want to show fair and wise leadership, of course, based on the religiousness of a king who obeys Buddhist teachings during his leadership in Sriwijaya. Arab, Indian and Chinese traders occupied the places provided by Sriwijaya, they often formed separate community groups on the banks of rivers or beaches with their merchant ships, some had settled semi-permanently in Sriwijaya.

The diversity of society in various fields, especially in the religious field, made Srivijaya have an important policy to address the differences between Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism. In Islam, the king of Sriwijaya really respected and appreciated the people, especially the Arab traders who lived in Sriwijaya to carry out their worship according to Islamic teachings. Mutual respect and high tolerance towards Islam is not only shown in the country, the king of Sriwijaya has sent two letters to the Umayyah people during the leadership of Umar bin Abdul Aziz in Arabia, including Sriwijaya asking mubaleg to be an advisor to the kingdom on Sriwijaya. Tolerance between religious communities is not only shown to Islam, However, for Hinduism that flourished in the land of Srivijaya, it also proved that the king of Sriwijaya was truly open to other religions. The site of the Bumiayu temple, which is located not far from the Lematang River, a tributary of the Musi river, is based on evidence of its Hindu heritage around the 9th - 13th century AD, the site was previously thought to be the power of Srivijaya vassals as well as a buffer for civilization from the interior of Sriwijaya.

### b. Suggestions

Students and lecturers in the higher education community are expected to be even more active in researching local history and culture in their respective regions as an effort to elevate local history and culture to become national history and culture as the identity of a nation.

For further researchers, it is hoped that they will be more active and enthusiastic in writing and researching the history of the Srivijaya kingdom so that in the end it will produce new research that has never been disclosed before.

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