

Chinese in Shari'a Territory: Ethnic And Religion Harmonization in Banda Aceh-Indonesia

Marzuki Abubakar

Universitas Islam Negeri UIN, Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh,
INDONESIA.

marzukiabubakar84@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Chinese ethnic are spreaded in entire Indonesia, including Aceh. Aceh is the only province in Indonesia which gains legalization to implement Islam shari'a. The existence of Chinese in Aceh was detected since 16th and 17th A.D. century, connected through trade, so that many Chinese lived in Aceh. This reality makes Aceh as the multicultural region with Muslim as the majority and Chinese as the minority with different religion that they profess. Different ethnic and religion should be very sensitive in society, moreover in Aceh which is known as shari'a Islam-implementing province. However, it does not seem as the big problem in Banda Aceh. Therefore, it is interesting to be studied how the harmony entwined between Chinese as the minority and Aceh people as the majority, is there any discrimination and hegemony in daily life? What is the factor which causes that harmonization still stand strong until today? The result of the research showed that the form of harmonization happening as follows, first, in form of social, economy, and education. In Banda Aceh Chinese lives peacefully and respects each other, there is no threat or conflict happening between Chinese and indigenous society. There are some factors causing the eternity of harmonization, i.e (1) the high of tasamuh culture (tolerance) Aceh people (2) the preservation of interfaith harmony (3) there is respect from Chinese toward the feature of Aceh.

Keyword: Chinese, shari'a territory, harmonization, Aceh-Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia as archipelago nation has become destination of foreign immigrants since long time ago until now, that is because of the easiness of driveway to Indonesia Archipelago, especially the way through Malacca strait. The existence of Chinese spreaded across Indonesia proves that Chinese is the oldest immigrant in Indonesia, in the beginning most of them were a trader and worker. Therefore, These Chinese hold very important role in Indonesia Economy until today. It is not really different from Chinese in other regions in Indonesia, Chinese in Aceh also has very significant role in trading, they exist almost in every regency/city in Aceh. It seems business as the first lesson that should be learned by Chinese kids, Because 98% Chinese is trader or working in business, only 2% of them work as employee or civil servant.

Aceh is the only province in Indonesia which gains legalization to implement Islam shari'a, According to Legislation Number 44 year 1999 about the implementation of feature of Aceh preferential province on 4 October 1999 and Legislation Number 18 year 2001 about special autonomy for Aceh preferential province established on 9 August 2001. Islam shari'a is Islamic teaching in Allah life aspects (Islam Shari'a department: 2009, p. 257). The implementation of Islam Shari'a is regulated in Aceh preferential province regulation number 5 year 2000 about Islam Shari'a implementation (Islam Shari'a: 2009).

Islam Shari'a implementation is regulated in Chapter II Aceh Preferential Province regulation (regional regulation/*Qanun*) number 5 year 2000 about Implementation of Islam Shari'a, the aim and the function paragraph 2 verse 2 mentioned that: *"The existence of other religions besides Islam is still approved in this region, its followers are able to perform their religion teaching"*.

In legislation number 18 year 2001 is mentioned that Islam shari'a implementation in Aceh is only implemented for Muslim people. So that, non Muslim is not forced to follow Islam Shari'a-based law or regulation. Aceh guarantees freedom of religion. Other religions besides Islam are allowed to perform their respective religion.

However, it is challenge for Chinese in Aceh. It does not mean that they are threatened by the existence of Islam Shari'a in Aceh, they are still as Indonesia citizen who live in Aceh as usual. In Banda Aceh city, Chinese mostly lives in Peunayong, or Peunayong village. Peunayong is popular with name Chinese village or Chinatown in Banda Aceh city. They mostly work as trader, almost all shops in Peunayong are run by Chinese. Shophouse which are settled by Chinese mostly as the place for business and living place, of course there are Aceh native people live trade together with Chinese there. Some Chinese also lives in villages and residences outside peunayong, but only few.

Many discourses and news from mass media always exaggerate that there is discrimination issue and violation against non Muslim caused by the implementation of Islam Shari'a in Aceh. That is really unfounded, because the implementation of Islam Shari'a in Aceh only for Muslim as *Qanun* mentioned. While non Muslim is only expected to respect that. Non Muslim is free to believe or worship based on their respective religion, without any terror or interference from majority people. Some non-governmental organizations censured the implementation of Islam shari'a in Aceh because they thought Islam shari'a in Aceh violate human right (Yusdani: 2006, p. 17), so did Gender-fighters agencies, they brought up woman-discriminated case in order to stop Islam Shari'a implementation in Aceh because it is considered discriminative.

In fact, non muslim people, especially Chinese as the majority non muslim in Aceh, after more than 10 (ten) years the legalization of Islam Shari'a in Aceh, feels safe and peaceful living in Aceh, there is no tragedy, discrimination incident, terror etc. The celebration of great day for christian, catholic, Hindu, Buddha always runs well, without any disruption, so does the celebration of Chinese great day, even the attraction of Barongsai is played by Aceh muslim kids. The harmony and tolerance is always kept by conducting good intercommunication in daily life, either in economy, social or education aspect.

That reality shows that Chinese lives in harmony and peace with Aceh native people in Banda Aceh city, although different in religion and ethnic. This is unique phenomenon, because of the position of Aceh as Islam Shari'a province, it is different from Chinese in other region, they are not attached with the legalization of Islam shari'a. Therefore, it becomes a very interesting and very important study as the information for people, and it can be model of pluralist-harmonized society which can be adopted by other regions in Indonesia and other countries in international level. So that, it is interesting to study how the form of harmony entwined between Chinese as minority and Aceh people as majority, what are the factors causing that harmonization still stands strong until today?

ISLAM, HARMONIZATION AND MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Rasulullah SAW showed the example for His followers, how to live in society, either with Muslim or with non Muslim. This manner was also continued by His friends *khulafaurrasyidin*, so were *tabi'* and *tabi'in* who conquered the land which were despotic to

its people. Having been conquered, Christian and Jew were not forced to convert to Islam, they still lived under Islam government. They were allowed to worship based on their respective religion.

In Islam government era in Andalusia, Spain, tolerance was enforced by the authority toward Christian and Jew, so that, they could participate to realize Arab-Islam civilization in Spain (Badri yatim: 2008, p. 106). Islam government did not prohibit Christian to study in those Islam-owned universities.

In Islam history, one of the biggest kingdom after abbasid was Mughal kingdom in India, the model of Islam kingdom which succeeded to make the kingdom protect other religion followers by using its *sulakhul* politic (universal tolerance). By using this politic system, all Indian was equal, not differed from ethnic and religion (Badri Yatim, 2008).

Rasulullah lived along with people of Madinah who some of them were Jew and Christian. They were able to live in peace and harmony under Rasulullah lead. It also happened in friend of Rasulullah khulafaurrasyidin, *tabi'* and *tabi'in* era.

ACEH AND CHINESE

Snouck Hurgronje stated according to Teungku Kuta Karang that Aceh has three elements of nation, Arab, Iran and Turkey (Hurgonje: 1985, 20). Some historian said that ACEH is the abbreviation of name of ethnics initials in the world, i.e Arab, China, Europe, Hindia (Kamruzzaman: 2012, p. 111). The statement is not without reason, it can be proved that Aceh has had the ancestry of those four ethnic until today. So that, Aceh is the shape of mixture process of various ethnic since the past era.

The description of Aceh name above showed that aceh has very rich ethnic since the past, living together with other ethnic has become the usual thing for Aceh people. so that the concept of multicultural has grown in Aceh people since the past. Moreover, the history proves that Aceh Darussalam kingdom led by Sultan Iskandar Muda had conduct various cooperation with various nations in the world like Chinese, even with Ottoman kingdom in Turkey (Baiquni Hasbi: 2014). The big bell as the gift from Admiral Cheng Ho for the king of Aceh, when he visited Aceh (Eko Auroso: 2010, p. 223-225), while Ottoman kingdom had ever given the aid for Aceh by sending warship, war equipment and army in order to help Aceh fighting the enemy.

It is known that Chinese has existed in Aceh since 16th and 17th century A.D, because of trade, so that many Chinese stayed in Aceh. At the beginning they were just seasonal trader, then they lived and builded the residence in Aceh. Some references even stated that Chinese has existed in Aceh since 13rd century A.D. some references said in the first time Chinese came to Aceh as the worker, and then they lived in Aceh. A. Rani Usman, writer of book "Ethnic Cina Perantauan di Aceh", satated that Chinese has lived in Peunayong since 9th century A.D.

Besides the trader including Chinese traders who were lived and traded permanently in the capital of Aceh, there were also Chinese trader who were seasonal trader who came by sailboat in certain month. The Chinese boats (*jung*) brought rice to Aceh. They lived in Chinese residence in the end point of city near by harbour. Their house was near each other and they brought down the stuff in harbour until then they distributed it. That place is known now as Peunayong.

Chinese spreads in accross Aceh, most of them work as trader, therefore, they mostly lived in town, exactly in trading area or market and they lived in shophouses. Chinese exists almost in

All regency/town in Aceh. Their existence becomes part of economy machine in regency/town.

CHINESE IN BANDA ACEH CITY: A Model Of Ethnic And Religion Harmonization

In Banda Aceh, Chinese lives in Peunayong, best known as Chinatown in Banda Aceh. They live in shophouse along. some shophouses are form like Chinese architecture, but some of them has been made in modern architecture style. These shophouses are the place to live and business, because most of Chinese work as trader, only few percent of them work as civil servant or private employee.

Chinese in Banda Aceh now are fourth and fifth generation from their great-grandfather who came since 19th century. They were Khek tribe who were from Kwantung province, Chinese. They were not mixed with Kong HU Cu, Hai Nan, and Hok Kian tribe (A. Rani Usman: 2009).

Peunayong becomes the symbol of diversity in Banda Aceh city, so that Gampong Peunayong has been declared as diversity village. Peunayong as the village with diversity of ethnic and religion. The ethnics which are lived in Peunayong are Aceh, Javanese, Chinese, Indian, and others. The diversity of religion can be seen from the existence of two churches in Peunayong, so do Vihara and Pagoda which is peace and safe in every worship time and great days celebration.

In this diversity creates the harmonization which has been bounded since long time ago. The difference of ethnic and religipm is not the barrier for people of Banda Aceh city which is known as the city of Islam Shari'a. Peunayong becomes the witness of Aceh Muslim's tolerance toward other ethnics and religions, tolerance of Muslim as the majority toward minority. It reveals the fact behind of incrimination that Shari'a Islam did not honor tolerance and violate the human rights. In the other hand, the fact shows that Muslim as the minority in other part of the world becomes the object of discrimination from majority ethnic and religion, like tragedy of Rohingya genocide in Burma. So that, it is not exaggerated that one of Chinese figure in Aceh stated that, "if you want to study about tolerande, look at Aceh!"

Harmonization in diversity can be seen from social side, economy and education. The existence of Chinese as the minority in Islam Shari'a land does not make them bridled and not free. In fact, the existence of Islam shari'a makes Chinese feels safer because the order of Islam shari'a society is more obvious and minimize crimes and violance harming the society. Sosial, economy and education aspect are the right viewpoints to see how the form of harmonization happening between Chinese and indigenou in Aceh, and also to see how extent the tolerance becomes the bound between the diversity of ethnicity and religion in Banda Aceh city.

The image of harmony in social-civic can be seen in every activity which is organized in Gampong Peunayong, either activity related to government or related to mores and culture. In election, in election of region head, House of representative and President, people who are from different ethnic and religion cooperate in doing their respective task to create purpose of togetherness. If there is the celebration of Rasulullah Muhammad birthday or other Islam great days, they cooperate in one committee and raise fund together for that event. Chinese new year celebration becomes very interesting when that celebration is livened by Barongsai, it is more impressed because some of Barongsai members are young Muslimah wearing hijab. This thing can be seen every year, the young muslimah involved because of their own desire, becayse they love Barongsai tradition. Their parents know about that and allow them to be involved in that activity.

Chinese respect Aceh people very well in daily intercommunication. So do Aceh people who respect Chinese. The very interesting image can be seen in coffee shop, the most favorite place in Aceh to relax and do many activities like *dakwah* and business. In Peunayong, we can easily find Aceh people drink coffee in one table with Chinese. They talk about daily life, business or just chat. They relax and chat like other society either in market or in guard post.

Economy in Aceh, especially in Banda Aceh is really influenced by Chinese. Almost all goods suppliers in Aceh are Chinese. In addition the big shops in Banda Aceh are belong to Chinese. We can say that Chinese holds economy in Banda Aceh. Peunayong is the shops area in Banda Aceh in which most Chinese lives. Peunayong is center of market in Banda Aceh. There are various markets in Peunayong, fish market, vegetable market, meat market, and also clothing market. Besides, there are the shops sell the equipment for car, workshop or garage, and other kind of shops. The seller in this market come from different background, they are Aceh people, Javanese, and Chinese. Most of shop owners are Chinese and some of them Aceh people.

Since sultanate era, Aceh has become preference land of nomads around the world. It is not only because Aceh was popularly known as the great and advanced kingdom, but also at that time Aceh was known as the place in which Islamic theologians mostly lived, and taught about Islam to people. therefore, various people in different nations came to Aceh to study with those theologians. Those theologian had the broad link which is connected with the Islamic theologians in Mecca and Madinah (Azra: 2013, p. 119-347). They taught Islam by holding ta'lim assembly and writing the books in order to make people easier to understand. They also builded *Dayah* (Islamic boarding school) to educate kids in order to make them know about religion since kid, so in the future they could be prepared as the next Islamic theologian who stood Islam teaching in this planet (Marzuki: 2011, p. 221-234).

Non Muslim in Banda Aceh is able to get school like other regions. So is Chinese, they can get education in every level at School in Banda Aceh. They only do not follow religion subject, because the subject is about Islam. During religion class, they can choose to stay at class or go out. The score of religion subject they get from pastor or their theologians.

In Banda Aceh, there is one Christian and one Catholic school, they are Christian Methodical foundation school and Budhi Dharma Catholic foundation school. Ones who study in those school are christian or Catholic, but there are some Buddhist and Hindu followers. Teachers in both school 80% are Aceh muslim, so are the employee. They works at non muslim institution without any discrimination or feeling small in front of non muslim. Both school still concern to non muslim teacher and employee and foundation, so the harmonization still stand up strongly.

According to sosial, economy and education aspect that has been explained, it can be known clearly that the relationship between Chinese and Aceh people as the indigenous people is very harmonious. They need and support each other, especially in creating peaceful, safe and prosperous society. This harmonization stands because of good motive from Aceh people and Chinese. If it is researched and reviewed more deeply, the harmony stands because of three reasons, i.e, (1) the high of *tasamuh* culture (tolerance) of Aceh people (2) preservation of interfaith harmony (3) the existence of respect from Chinese toward the special of Aceh.

First, the high *tasamuh* culture (tolerance) of Aceh people. The existence of other ethnics in Aceh is not something new for Aceh people. Since Sultanate era, Aceh has been visited by various nations and ethnics around the world, even before Islam came in Indonesia. This is the foundation of strong tolerance among Aceh people. Arab, China, and Europe regularly visited Aceh for trade mission or politic. Therefore, many of them married with indigenous

people and lived in Aceh. Until today, Aceh people lives together with different ethnics and religion. This situation has happened for long time from generation to generation. This habit becomes culture of Aceh people, tolerant with other ethnic. Therefore, tolerance is not made up or just came, but it has practiced for long time, and become Aceh people's habit which cannot be separated in daily life.

Islam teaching is practiced and grown inside Aceh people as the foundation and life philosophy of Aceh people. The practice of that philosophy in daily life becomes the habit of Aceh people which has applied hereditary and then become as the culture. Islam intergrates with culture of Aceh people, so every culture of Aceh people is part of Islamic teaching. the islamic habit of Aceh people is the reflection of characters which is based on value from Al-Quran and Hadith. This imperishable relationship is supported by the existence of educational activity and special learning about multiculturalism in order to make students understand the phenomenon of differential ethnic and religion in daily life (Zumratul Mukaffa: 2012).

Second, the harmony of interfaith stands well in Aceh, there is no any dispute or religion conflict in Banda Aceh.

Non muslim in Aceh, Cathoulic, Hindu, Buddha, always perform their religion without any barriers. Muslim in Aceh do not limit non muslim in performing their religion. They are expected to respect Muslim as the majority, such as no spreading their religion to Muslim, and vice versa. It can make the harmony stronger in Aceh, so, all people can live peacefully and safely, can perform their religion without fearness and restless.

Some religious leaders said that non muslim does not feel disturbance because of Islam shari'a implementation in Aceh. Non muslim respond positively about Islam Shari'a in Aceh, because it is only for Muslim, whereas non muslim is expected to respect it.

The teacher in Budi Dharma foundation school who are catholic, admitted that she lives in village in Lambaro which its villagers are all muslim, but, she admits that he has never missed the event or activity organized in that village, she is always invited, she even help to cook if there is party. The owner of workshop in Peunayong, Hindu follower, admitted that He and other Hindu followers are never feel bad or feel disturbance because of Islam Shari'a in Aceh, because according to him Aceh people usually live together with other religion followers.

Third, there is honot from Chinese toward Aceh speciality. One of Aceh speciality is in religious aspect, Aceh is given the authority to handle the religion affairs which comes from legislation signed by Indonesia government to manage Islam shari'a implementation in Aceh. The lagonalization of Islam shari'a in Aceh is the speciality of Aceh as the Islam majority province. It does mean that before that Aceh did not implemet Islam shari'a, but, this legalization is important to strenghten the authority of Aceh government in overseeing directly the implementation of Islam Shari'a. Therefore, there is the institution in Aceh which manage Islam shari'a affairs, it is department of Islam shari'a. That department manages Islam shari'a affairs implementation, it cooperates with ministry of religious affairs in region level and center.

CONCLUSION

Chinese is Indonesia citizen, although they have different characters in case of religion and culture. There are many Chinese culture has become Indonesian culture, as the proof that Chinese is part of Indonesia. Chinese lives in harmony and peacefully with Aceh people as the indigenous. There is no conflict and war between Aceh people and Chinese. Chinese

respects Aceh islam people, and vice versa. The different in ethnic and religion is not the problem in daily life, they blend in togetherness in every activity, either social, economy or education. Mosque, church, vihara, and temple stand closely in Peunayong is the proof of how harmonious the relationship between Aceh people and other ethnic and religion.

Until today, harmonization between Aceh and Chinese is preserved, kept, and imperishable. It is caused by as follows: (1) The high of *tasamuh* culture (tolerance) of Aceh people (2) preservation of interfaith harmony. The relationship between Chinese and Aceh people in Peunayong, Banda Aceh becomes the model of harmonious plural society, which respects diversity and honor highly the harmony.

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