



Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon as Representation of the Muslim Community in Cirebon

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Abstract. Once upon a time, Cirebon became one of the stopovers for traders from various countries, such as Arab and China. This makes Cirebon one of the cities with a diversity of ethnic, cultures, and religions. This can be seen from several historical places in Cirebon that have various cultural patterns, such as Chinese, Hindu-Buddha, and Javanese-Islam cultural patterns. One of the historical places in Cirebon is the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon. This mosque is the oldest and historic mosque in Cirebon city built by *Wali Sanga* to spread Islam in Cirebon among cultural acculturation found in Cirebon city. This study examines how the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* represents the society of Cirebon as Muslim community that holds Islamic values in existing cultural diversity. The aim is to explain how the process of the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon represents the society of Cirebon as Muslim community. This research uses qualitative methods with a descriptive approach. The results show that Muslim community in Cirebon city is represented by existence of the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* through symbols, ornaments, and traditions in the mosque. The symbols, ornaments, and traditions have some meaning that represents Islamic values. It caused the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon as a representation of Muslim community in Cirebon. Therefore, Cirebon society is known for its strong Islamic religion among cultural acculturation that exists in Cirebon.

Keywords: *Representation, Great Mosque of Sang Cipta Rasa, Cirebon.*

1 Introduction

Cirebon City is located in the north coastal area of Java Island, West Java province. It is the main track of transportation from Jakarta to West Java and Central Java via the north coastal area of Java Island known as *Pantura*. [1] Cirebon becomes a border area between West Java and Central Java. It makes Cirebon have an important role in shipping and trading both inter-island and inter-country. [2] Cirebon also became an area visited by traders from various countries such as China and Arab. Therefore, Cirebon was one of the cities that became a trading center in the west of Java region. [3]

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As the city that became a stopover for traders from various countries, Cirebon became a meeting place for various cultures and religions. It made Cirebon famous for its diverse culture and religion. One of religions that spread in Cirebon was Islam. The spread of Islam began with appearance of Islamic kingdom in the 15th century of Hindu-Majapahit era. [4] Cirebon was one of the cities that became spread center of Islam in the west of Java Island.

The arrival of Islam in Cirebon left a culture that had existed before, namely the culture of Hindu-Buddha kingdom era. The culture of Hindu-Buddha era still exists in society until now. [5] Furthermore, the existence of cultural diversities is also a cultural heritage left behind by immigrants from the Chinese and Middle East. Therefore, it establishes acculturation of culture between Hindu-Buddha, Javanese, Chinese, and Arabic cultures. [6] The acculturation of culture was seen from heritage things in various aspects of life in Cirebon society. Some of heritage sites are still seen until this moment. The heritage sites are *Topeng Dance*, Cirebon *Batik*, Kasepuhan Palace, and the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon.

The Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* is located in complex area of Kasepuhan Palace Cirebon, in the west of town square. Based on administrative location, it is located on Jalan Keraton Kasepuhan 43, Kasepuhan Subdistrict, Lemahwungkuk District, Cirebon City, West Java, Indonesia. [7] The Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon was established by *Sunan Gunung Jati*. According to Kasepuhan Palace, the mosque was built in 1500, but based on other sources, it was built in 1478, 1480, or 1498. [8] The construction was led by *Sunan Kalijaga* and *Raden Sepat* as an architect. [9] The Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* became a place for spreading Islam and a place for *Wali Sanga* meetings. [10]

The Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* is one of the oldest and historic mosques in Cirebon. This mosque was built in transition era of Hindu-buddha toward Java-Islam. Therefore, the mosque also has strong Hindu values. [11] Furthermore, this mosque has unique and beautiful architecture. The buildings and ornaments from the mosque combine Javanese, Islamic, Hindu-Buddha, and Chinese cultures. It can be seen from roof of the mosque, carvings, doors as well as the mosque's mihrab, which symbolizes three religions developed in Cirebon at that time, namely Islam, Hindu, and Buddha. Besides the architecture, this mosque has several unique traditions, namely *Adzan Pitu* tradition and the pool in the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon. The water of the pool is trusted, it can grant desire and ask for recovery of sick people. Meanwhile, *Adzan Pitu* tradition is conducted by seven muezzins who get dressed in all white or green and announce a call to prayer (*Adzan*) in Friday prayer at the same time. The tradition is a form of mixing Hindu and Islamic Cultures. [12]

Nowadays, the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* still maintains the original ornaments and it has not changed. It makes the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* become a symbol of Cirebon city. It became a symbol of Muslim community in Cirebon among the cultural acculturation. Therefore, this research wants to study how the mosque represents Muslim community in Cirebon city that honors Islam values and holds a firm sense of belief in traditions, symbols, and ornaments found in the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon among cultural acculturation in Cirebon city.

2 Method

This research used a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. The data source used is the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon and supported by existing data obtained from interviews, observations, as well study references. Observations carried out on ornaments, symbols, and traditions found in the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon. Open-ended and deep interviews were carried out with the mosque administrators and *imams* who understand history as well as symbols and ornaments meaning of the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon. Besides, interviews were done with some mosque visitors. Meanwhile, study references were carried out in books, journals, and articles that discuss the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon and the theory. The theory used in this research is representation theory by Stuart Hall. The results of observation, interview, and study references were used as data for this research.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 The history of the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon

Cirebon is a region located in West Java province. It is one of places that crosses Indonesian water. As a place that crossed Indonesian water, Cirebon became a stopover place for traders from other countries, such as Arab and China. Islam entered Cirebon in two ways, namely trading and preaching. Islam was spread through traders who stopped in Cirebon and spread it through preachers from other cities then continued to the rulers in Cirebon. [3]

The first spreader figure of Islam in Cirebon is *Sheikh Nurjati* who had a student named *Pangeran Walangsungsang*. *Pangeran Walangsungsang* spread Islam massively, then Islamic preaching was continued by *Sunan Gunung Jati* after the daughter of *Pangeran Walangsungsang* got married to *Sunan Gunung Jati*. [3] *Sunan Gunung Jati* established Kasultanan Cirebon and the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* during his leadership to expand Islamic preaching. The construction of the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* involved hundreds of people from Majapahit, Demak, and Cirebon. *Sunan Kalijaga* was chosen by *Sunan Gunung Jati* to lead the construction and accompanied by *Raden Sepat* as the architect. [13]

3.2 Ornaments, Symbols, Traditions at the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon

The Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* is the oldest and the most historic mosque in Cirebon city. Each ornament and symbol has a meaning. Several meanings contain Islamic values that can make humans always remember God. It makes humans always have good behavior, scared of God as well as guidelines for humans, especially for Cirebon society. Those ornaments, symbols, and traditions are:

3.2.1 *Paduraksa* Gateway



Figure 1. Paduraksa Gateway

This door is called *Paduraksa* gateway. It is main gate of the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa*. It is located in the middle of a red-brick fence that surrounds the mosque. Six doors of the mosque surround the yard. There are three doors in the east, one door in the north, and two doors in the west. The location of main gate is in the east. At the top of gate, there is Arabic writing that says *Put it on your beautiful clothes in every enter the mosque* as listed in the Qur'an Surah *Al-A'raf* verse 31. [8] The Gate has two leaf doors that have a barrel temple and rhombus decoration in each leaf of the door. *Paduraksa* Gateway has many influences from Hindu architecture like barrel temples and rhombus decorations found in architecture with Hindu culture patterns. Besides, the red color of brick used as a fence that surrounds the mosque has the same color and pattern as buildings used in kingdom of Majapahit era.

3.2.2 Mosque Interior



Figure 2. Mosque porch

After entering main gate, it will be seen that the mosque building consists of a main building and porch. The main wall of mosque is made from a pile of red-colored bricks. There are nine doors surrounding main building, one main door in the east, four doors in the north, and four doors in the south. These nine doors show nine people of *Wali Sanga*. [7] It is only the main door that is in normal size, meanwhile, the other eight doors are in small size. The height of eight doors is just around half from height of a normal adult. It means that we must stoop down when we want to enter the main room of mosque. Furthermore, the main door does not open every day, the door only opens on Islamic days, such as Eid Fitri, Eid al-Adha, as well as on Friday to carry out Friday prayer. Meanwhile, it is just four small doors in the north that open daily. Therefore, we must stoop down when we want to enter the main room of mosque for worship. The symbol of doors means that as high as a position that you have in the world, it will be the same as the other in the face of God. Also, it means that as humans, we must have low hearts and always stoop down for others. Humans prohibit being arrogant people and being always grateful for what we have.

3.2.3 Mosque pole



Figure 3. Mosque poles

The poles were made from original teak wood under the leadership of *Sunan Gunung Jati*. Nowadays, the poles still stand sturdy to sustain the building. There are 74 poles in the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa*, number 7 symbolizes human creation that passes seven times processes and number 4 symbolizes four people that recite the prayer after Friday prayer is finished, namely, *imam*, *khatib*, *muroqi*, and *muezzin*. [7] Meanwhile, 12 poles of 74 poles are known as *Soko Guru*.

3.2.4 Saka Tatal



Figure 4. *Saka tatal*

Saka tatal is a pole made by *Sunan Kalijaga*. The pole is formed from wood fragments that are stacked neatly into a pole form. It means that the differences that exist around us due to the differences of ethnic group and religion will not make us fall, but we must unite and cooperate in life. It will create a sense of unity.

3.2.5 *Mihrab*



Figure 5. Mosque *mihrab*

Mihrab is located in main building of the mosque. *Mihrab* is a marker of *Qibla's* location as well as a place for *imam* to lead the prayer. There are hanging decorations from *Lotus* carving above the top of *Mihrab*. This decoration is located in a special place namely *mihrab*. The meaning of *Lotus* carving in Hindu-Buddha religion is a symbol of power and spiritual knowledge. *Lotus* becomes enlightenment from reflection that is carried out by someone after meditating following Buddhist religion. *Lotus* means prohibition to think only about worldly things. [14] *Lotus* is considered a sacred flower and has become a symbol of sun, beauty, and purity. However, in this mosque, *Lotus* was created as decoration on *mihrab* where the *imam* led the prayer.

3.2.6 Pool



Figure 6. Two pools in the mosque

At that time, these pools were a *Wudhu* place for *Wali Sanga*. These pools never receded although in the dry season. Two water pools that can be used. It is located in the north of mosque porch. Nowadays, many people take and utilize water from pool to *Wudhu* or known as *Ngalap Berkah*. These pools are believed to grant someone's desire and recover sick people. This belief appeared because these pools were once considered touching with *Wali Sanga*. Besides, these pools are also called *Banyu Cis*. [7] The term *Banyu Cis* appeared because there are prayer rituals performed in taking water. This ritual can be done by a specific person in the mosque. It cannot be done by people randomly. Prayer rituals and *Shalawat* are done while putting the *Cis stick* into the pool several times, then the water is drunk to sick people.

3.2.7 Istiwa



Figure 7. Time-prayer pointer

Istiwa is a tool to point out the time-prayer. It is used with assistance from the sun. Since the leadership of *Sunan Gunung Jati*, it has been used as a time-prayer pointer. This tool is located in the north door of mosque. It is a round shape with an iron pole on the surface.

3.2.8. *Adzan Pitu*



Figure 8. *Adzan Pitu* tradition

Besides the ornaments and symbols in the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon, this mosque also has another unique tradition, namely, *Adzan Pitu*. *Adzan Pitu* is a call to prayer (*Adzan*) that is announced by seven muezzins at the same time every Friday prayer. The muezzins are chosen people. They announced *Adzan* by wearing all white or green clothes. This tradition has been hereditary since hundreds of years ago. There is a story behind the emergence of *Adzan Pitu* tradition. According to the story, *Adzan Pitu* was first announced to remove disease and death that struck Cirebon city at that time. [12] Nowadays, *Adzan Pitu* tradition is still implemented because it is believed it can protect Cirebon society from dangerous diseases.

3.2.9. *Gebyok*



Figure 9. *Gebyok* door

Gebyok is a door divider in the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon. *Gebyok* has a Hindu-Islam mixture ornament called *Lung- Lungan*. *Gebyok* has an Arabic carving on top of it. It means beautiful expression and life harmony that symbolizes kindness, hope, and respect for other people and nature. [8]

3.2.10. Wall Ornaments



Figure 10. Wall Ornaments

These ornaments are located on the wall at the east side of the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon. These ornaments are nodes formed typically in China.

3.3 Discussion

The existence of the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* is a symbol of Muslim community embodiment in Cirebon city. However, with the existence of various cultures found in Cirebon, it became a strong cultural acculturation in the mosque. Nevertheless, this mosque can maintain its identity as a representation of Muslim community in Cirebon.

This research uses representation theory from Stuart Hall. Stuart Hall is one of experts on culture theories, one of the theories is representation. Representation is something that represents something else or a sign that has meaning and means for others. Representation connects meaning and language to culture. Meaning is produced and exchanged in society through representation. [15] Representation becomes important because culture is formed through meaning and language. Representation is considered as a means of communication and social interaction. There are three main theories in representation, namely, Reflective Theory, Intentional Theory, and Constructionist Theory. [16] [15] It stated that reflective theory is theory that reflects existing meaning, meanwhile, intentional theory is meaning determined by speaker through symbols. The constructionist theory is different from two previous theories, it is against the idea that an object has a meaning and meaning is not formed through language. This third theory triggers how meaning is reconstructed. Representation connects ideas with language to interpret something. This shows that it does not only represent cultural identity but also process of how cultural values are represented.

The results and findings stated that the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon is a mosque that has an element combination of Islamic, Chinese, and Hindu-Buddha culture, both in architectural building and ornaments. It happened because of existence of cooperation between *Wali Sanga* and Chinese ethnic at that time when Islam was being spread massively on Java Island. Meanwhile, acculturation between Islam and Hindu-Buddha occurred because many Indonesian people adhered to Hindu-Buddha before Islam came to Indonesia. It results that many Hindu-Buddha heritages found in several areas. It makes Hindu-Buddha culture still feel strong in Cirebon city. The purpose of cooperation between *Wali Sanga* and Chinese ethnicities is to spread Islam and weave harmony between cultures. The cooperation makes some Chinese ethnic believe in Islam and embrace Islam. Therefore, even though the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* has a lot of ornaments in Chinese and Hindu-Buddha style, this

mosque is a symbol for Muslim community in Cirebon as well as used as a place of worship for Muslim community. The meaning and message contained through symbols and ornaments in the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon is a production from a language that is spread by people. People believe and spread it then become a meaning that is represented by objects.

4 Conclusion

The Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon is one of the oldest and historic mosques in Cirebon. This mosque became one of places to spread Islam in Cirebon during transition period from Hindu-Buddha kingdom towards Islamic kingdom. It also became a stopover place for Chinese ethnic for trading, even settled in Cirebon. This makes Cirebon in an acculturation culture. However, acculturation that exists in Cirebon, still makes the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* a representation of Muslim community. The Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon represents Muslim community through its symbols, ornaments, and traditions. The symbols, ornaments, and traditions have some meaning that represents Islamic values. It created the Great Mosque of *Sang Cipta Rasa* Cirebon as a representation of Muslim community in Cirebon. Therefore, Cirebon society is known for strong Islamic religion among cultural acculturation that exists in Cirebon.

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